DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 413 497 CE 075 152

AUTHOR	Medel-Anonuevo, Carolyn, Ed.
TITLE	Women Reading the World. Policies and Practices of Literacy in Asia. UIE Studies 6.
INSTITUTION	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Hamburg (Germany). Inst. for Education.
ISBN	ISBN-92-920-820-10
PUB DATE	1996-00-00
NOTE	129p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Case Studies; Community Development; Community Education; Community Programs; Educational Improvement; Educational Needs; *Educational Policy; *Educational Practices; Educational Strategies; Empowerment; Foreign Countries; Government School Relationship; Illiteracy; Lifelong Learning; *Literacy Education; Nonformal Education; Outcomes of Education; Theory Practice Relationship; *Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Asia

ABSTRACT

Papers from national seminars in five countries documenting the literacy practices that have developed through time include: "Preface" (Medel-Anonuevo); "Introduction"; "Illiteracy Eradication in Vietnam; Past Achievements and Orientation for Development in the New Stage" (Mac); "Brief Situationer of Women's Literacy in Bangladesh" (Huq); "Bangladesh Government Literacy Initiative: The Integrated Nonformal Education Program (INFEP)" (Rahman); "Brief Situationer of Women's Literacy in India" (Dighe); "Literacy Policies and Programs for Women in the Philippines"; "History of Literacy Efforts and Current Policies on Women's Literacy" (Sese); "Engendering Adult Literacy" (Clarke); "Educational Strategies for Women--A Case Study of Mahila Samakhya, Banda" (Samakhya); "The Literacy Program of Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB)" (Khandakar); "Models of Literacy Program in Nepal"; "Linking Total Literacy to Universal Elementary Education" (Rampal); "Two Views on Literacy Strategies in India" (Priyam, Sundaraman); "Innovations in Literacy Practice in Nepal"; #Case Study of Bihar Mahila Samakhya" (Sujita); "Some Notes on Non-formal Education for Women in Thailand" (Leesuwan); "German Government Organization for Technical Cooperation/Basic Education for Afghan Refugees--Female Literacy" (Adam); "The Education Forum's Literacy-Numeracy Program" (Sipin); "Some Tips in Doing Literacy Work" (Doronila); "Maori Development Committee of the Adult Reading and Learning Assistance" (Grey); "Korean Research Institute for Women's Life" (Chan); "The Literacy Circle" (Sundaraman); "Development of Methods and Instructional Materials for Women in Bangladesh" (Kabeer); "On Language and Indigenous Knowledge"(Doronila); "Language and Representation" (Rampal); "Development of Literacy Learning Materials for Women" (Thong); "Choice of Words for Literacy Curriculum and Materials"; "Analysis of Total Literacy Campaign Primers" (Patel); "Incorporating Health Education in Literacy Efforts" (Sundaraman); "The Content of Functional Knowledge in Literacy Programs for Women in Vietnam" (Thai, Bui); "Impact of Literacy on Women in India" (Dighe); "Concerns on Literacy Practices in Bangladesh"; "Theory and Practice of Women's Literacy in Bangladesh: Problems and Issues"

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(Latif); "Women's Empowerment Strategies in Post-Literacy Campaigns--Some Experiences from Tamil Nadu" (Sudha); "Problems of Literacy Programs in Nepal"; "Summary of the Main Points Raised in the National and Regional Seminars"; "The Challenges Ahead" (Ramdas); and "Summary of the Main Issues Discussed in the Second Day of the Regional Seminar" (Doronila). (MN)

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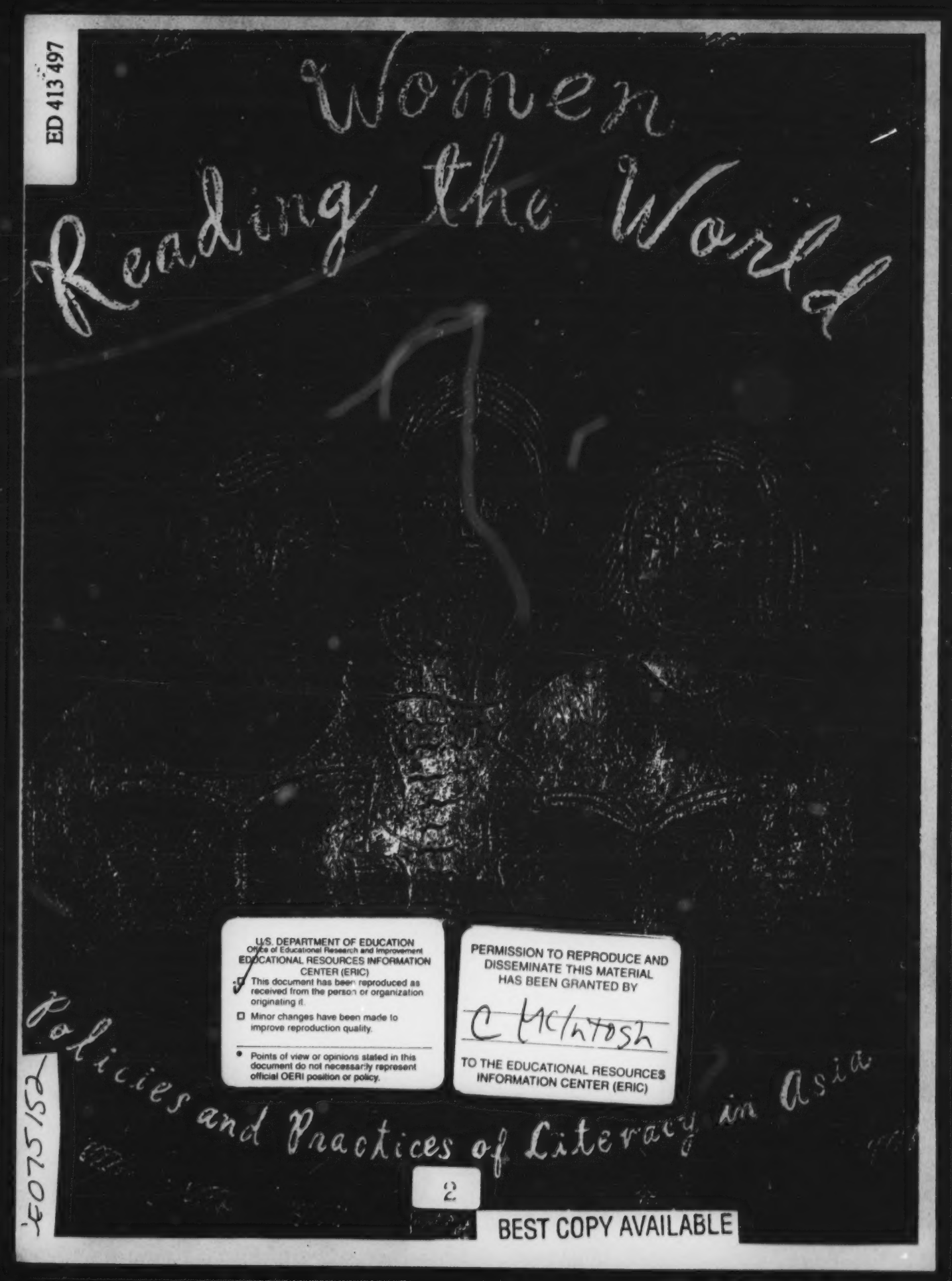

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Policies and Practices of Literacy in Asia

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UIE Studies 6 ♦ 1996

WOMEN READING THE WORLD

Policies and Practices of Literacy in Asia

edited by Carolyn Medel-Añonuevo

UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamburg

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Cover illustration: Joanne de Leon

© UNESCO Institute for Education 1996
Feldbrunnenstraße 58
P.O. Box 13 10 23
20110 Hamburg, Germany

ISBN 92 920 820 1069 4

Printed by
Robert Seemann ♦ Neumann-Reichard-Str. 27-33
Haus 8, I Stock
22041 Hamburg, Germany ♦ Tel 040/656-0003

PREFACE

This publication grew out of a year's collaborative process with government agencies, NGOs, women's groups and researchers working in the area of literacy. Asia, being the home of the majority of the world's illiterates, was the most appropriate region to bring together these diverse actors to exchange experiences and work out a plan of action.

Starting with national seminars in five countries, this research project ended with a regional seminar that brought together representatives from 10 countries in the region. In the country seminars, aside from sharing their work on literacy, the participants were expected to draw up a country situationer that would not only dwell on the numbers of illiterates but, perhaps more importantly, document the literacy practices that have developed through time. Furthermore it was anticipated that the seminar would be a venue where the different actors would talk about their perspectives on women and literacy as well as influence each others' practice. For example, it was planned that by bringing women's groups to the seminar, a more gender-sensitive appraisal of literacy practices could be developed.

In spite of all the rhetoric on the importance of women and literacy, research that is able to guide conceptualization and implementation of policies and programs either is lacking or has not been disseminated. We would like to think that by organizing these seminars and disseminating selected papers and discussion that have emerged from them through this publication, we are able to make this small contribution to fill the gap.

While this work is based on the realities of Asia, we would also like to offer it to literacy practitioners all over the world with the hope that the experiences that we have culled in this volume will allow them to reflect on their own practices.

We believe that, by bringing together a total of 180 women and men in these national and regional seminars, we have started a participatory and collaborative process. We are therefore grateful to these women and men for sharing their work and anticipate that whatever they have learned in these seminars, is now slowly being put into practice.

Financial resources to bring together these people had to be generated and for these, we are thankful to the Foreign Office of the German government, to the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) and to the Swiss Development Corporation (SDC).

Through partnerships with different organizations, we were able to organize relevant and effective seminars and to their staff members, we offer our heartfelt thanks: in the Philippines, the Center for Women's Resources (CWR) and the Education Research Program (ERP) of the Center for Integrated Development Studies (CIDS) of the University of the Philippines; in Vietnam, the Continuing Education Department of the Ministry of Education and Training; in India, the Women's Policy and Advocacy Unit of the National Institute of Advanced Studies; in Bangladesh, the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB); in Nepal, Save the Children US (SCUS) and the Women Development Division of the Ministry of Local Development; and for the Regional Seminar held in the Philippines, KALAKASAN and again, the Education Research Program (ERP).

Finally this publication could not have been possible without Cendrine Sebastiani of the Publications Section of UIE, who is primarily responsible for the lay-out of this publication and who was so patient in the process of revising and editing of the texts; and Suzanne Musiol who keyed in most of the papers presented during the seminars. We also appreciate the efforts of Joanne de Leon, who created the book cover as well as the illustrations for the four chapters and to Norimyl Dangel-Perocho for the illustration found in the concluding portion of the publication.

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INTRODUCTION

The declaration of International Literacy Year (ILY) in 1990 has revived interest in literacy work. Most of it premised on the urgent need for the Third World to achieve total literacy by the year 2000. The World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) held in Jomtien the same year furthermore put women in the center of the policy discourse as demonstrated in the World Declaration on Education for All which stated that "the most urgent priority is to ensure access, to and improve the quality of, education for girls and women".

While the discourse on the need for literacy and its connection to development had not changed drastically, what was interesting in the 1990 discourse was its policy pronouncement to address not only the unchecked growth of the non-literate population but more specifically to deal with the gender imbalance where 60% of the non-literate population are women.

Consequently a large number of literacy initiatives from government, NGOs and women's groups have in varying degrees and for different reasons focused on women. This is a most welcome development because it is assumed that the more agencies involved in reaching out to the vast majority of the underprivileged women, the better the outcome will be for the latter.

Much of these efforts however remain unknown to the different agencies concerned. There are a few occasions where government, NGOs, women's groups in a country have been able to come together and discuss women and literacy, the reasons ranging from geographical limitations, mistrust of each other's efforts, ignorance of the existence of other programs and the absence of mechanisms to come together. As one can see, the reasons are interrelated. Since there is hardly any exchange of information on these different initiatives, it is breeding ground for apprehension and suspicion. There are more implications for this lack of information and communication. Duplication of efforts, initiatives that contradict each other and lack of sharing effective methods and content, all do not serve well the interests of the women.

It is in this context that the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE) conceptualized this action research project where five national seminars and a regional seminar in Asia were organized. The objectives of the seminars were: 1) to provide a forum where practitioners can come together to share their work and perspectives on women and literacy; and as a result 2) come up with a preliminary situation on women's literacy which not only focuses on numbers but also in existing practices, process and content; 3) cull lessons from these efforts so that participating organizations can assess the strengths and weaknesses of their initiatives; and based on the lessons and recommendations 4) discuss a plan of action that organizations can work on individually or collaboratively.

It is impossible to capture the richness of the presentation and discussions that unfolded in a total of 18 days of dialogue and exchanges. What one reads in the succeeding pages is therefore an abbreviated form of such a process which I hope is able to represent the diversity and complexity of literacy work among women.

Chapter One discusses the history of literacy efforts in Vietnam and the Philippines, countries with high literacy rates but who are presently experiencing increasing percentage of illiteracy, especially among those living in isolated and mountainous areas, many of which are ethnic communities. The present efforts of the Bangladesh government to encourage female education is also briefly explained. The last article tackles the necessity for donor agencies and governments not only to come out with explicit policy pronouncements but more importantly, to invest in such programs. Finally, a table on the latest illiteracy rates is provided for context and reference.

The Second Chapter covers the range of strategies and approaches used in literacy across the region. Four of the articles deal with the experiences in India with their two pronged-strategy on women and literacy, the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) and the Mahila Samakhya. There is also a short presentation of a Bangladeshi NGO program followed by two short articles summarizing the models and innovations of literacy work in Nepal. Also included is a discussion of the development and salient characteristics of a literacy-numeracy program ran by an NGO in the Philippines.

The content of literacy primers and curriculum is the focus of Chapter Three. The Bangladeshi and the Vietnamese articles outline the considerations in the development of instructional materials followed by a more critical appraisal of literacy primers in India. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the content of functional knowledge in literacy programs for women in Vietnam.

Chapter Four brings together three articles which looks into the problems and impact of literacy programs. The first article is a study from India based on literacy scores and a QRE while the succeeding paper talks about the theory and practice of women's literacy in Bangladesh. Finally, a more narrative assessment on another experience in India is presented.

The last section of this publication outlines the main points raised in the four other chapters and ends with a challenge for policy-makers, practitioners and researchers.

While appearing simple to others, literacy work is a complex phenomenon involving pedagogical principles and political processes. Literacy work is about representation and reproduction of symbols whether for subjugation or for empowerment. Literacy work, if it is to address the needs of the range of communities has to start by respecting this diversity. For while literacy work is commonly aimed to teach women and men knowledge and skills so that they can be integrated in the wider community, it also must recognize the possibilities of enriched literacy practices when respect for diversity is incorporated.

We hope that in our own way, this publication is able to contribute to the celebration of such diversity and at the same time recognizing the power dimensions underlying literacy work. With this, I would like to end by quoting one of the participants in the Regional seminar,

> "*.... illiteracy has often been seen as a problem of the illiterate - a disease that has to be eradicated or a deficiency of the person. But what we would like to do is to deconstruct this notion. We should look at literacy as a structural issue. Who makes the policies? Who defines literacy?*"

CHAPTER I

POLICY DISCOURSES ON LITERACY: Views from the Past and Present

ILLITERACY ERADICATION IN VIETNAM
PAST ACHIEVEMENTS AND ORIENTATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW STAGE

Cu Quang Mac
Deputy Director of CED

For nearly half of the century, in extremely difficult circumstances Vietnamese people have perserveringly realized literacy programmes and unceasingly sought every way to enhance the people's cultural standard. In September 1945 when the Democratic Republic of Vietnam came into being, over 90% of the population were illiterate. Today Vietnam is ranked among countries that have already achieved high literacy rate (over 88%). To appreciate the gains, this paper documents the history of the literacy efforts of the Vietnamese people as well as the challenges and prospects they face in the future.

I. The History of Illiteracy Eradication and Achievements

The illiteracy eradication undertaking of Vietnam has undergone many different stages. In each stage, the enhancement of the people's cultural standard is always paid great attention to, even when there were so many difficulties. The raising of the people's educational level is regarded as a factor closely related to the sense of mastering one's own destiny, the ability for development, living conditions improvement and the sense of national defense of the people.

Illiteracy eradication is a long and continuous process, involving the efforts of many sectors of the people, and of them the core are the teachers and educational administrators. The movement of illiteracy eradication has overcome thousands of difficulties and won great achievements: from 95 percent of the people illiterate in the time before August Revolution to more than 10 percent at present.

The history of illiteracy eradication in Vietnam has passed through the following phases:

- Before the year 1945: The fight against illiteracy was linked with the movement for national salvation.
- The Democratic Republic of Vietnam was founded (2 September 1945), the fight against illiteracy became a policy of the State and the first campaign of illiteracy eradication was launched by President Ho Chi Minh himself. This mobilization continued to develop in nine years of the resistance against the French Colonialists (1946-1954).
- In 1954, the North was completely liberated. After the campaign on literacy (1956-1958), illiteracy was basically eradicated in the North.
- With the great victory in spring 1975, the South was completely liberated, illiteracy eradication was seen as the urgent task by the government.
- With the completion of the campaign of illiteracy eradication (1976-1978), illiteracy was basically eradicated in all 21 provinces of the South.

The subsequent discussion elaborates on the context and gains of these phases.

A. Before August Revolution in 1945, Vietnam was a colony of the French, the economy was backward, and 95% of the Vietnamese were illiterate. In this setting the Association for National Language Dissemination was founded and relied on the intellectuals to launch the anti-illiteracy movement. The Association encouraged its members to collect money and organized literacy classes for the working people in the pagoda, village communal houses or schools.

At the same time, the Association developed a minimum programme necessary for the illiterate adults consisting of two kinds of classes: 'primary' and 'higher primary'.

- The objective of the 'primary class' was to enable the learners to read and write Vietnamese script (national language) and do some simple operations such as addition and substraction.

- The objective of 'higher primary class' was to strengthen the results achieved by the learners in primary class, and consolidate the reading and writing skills, and help the learners to perform 4 operations: addition, substraction, multiplication and division, solve some simple problems and grasp some common knowledge.

Particularly, the Association created a new method for teaching Vietnamese script for the adults in order to arouse interest for them and facilitate their learning. The training for teachers on the contents and methods of teaching and organizing literacy classes was given special attention. As the anti-illiteracy movement was strongly launched, it took root in the masses and became a voluntary action of the people. From some scattered centers at the beginning, it gradually expanded to many areas in the whole country.

Through the activists of the anti-illiteracy movement from 1939 to the beginning of 1945, the Association helped over sixty thousand people become literate and assisted over ten thousand people to receive post literacy education.

B. With the success of the August Revolution in 1945 the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was founded. In the first meeting of the Council of the government on September 3, 1945, President Ho Chi Minh regarded illiteracy eradication as the second task after the anti-famine task. In this connection, the Government issued three decrees on September 8, 1945:

- **Decree N. 17:**
  "An anti-illiteracy campaign was launched in the whole Vietnam country".

- **Decree N. 19:**
  "In the whole country evening classes for literacy were organized for peasants and workers".

- **Decree N. 20:**
  "In the time to wait for the establishment of a compulsory primary education, the learning of Vietnamese script (national language) will be compulsory and free for all people from now on ...".

Through these, illiteracy eradication was institutionalized. In October 1945, President Ho Chi Minh issued "An Appeal to the whole Vietnamese people for Illiteracy Eradication" where he exhorted that "illiteracy eradication is a task of the whole society, the literate has the obligation to teach the illiterate". Furthermore, he emphasized that "Women all the more have to learn. For the long time women were held back. This is the time for you, sisters to try to be equal with men...".

Though the famine occurred, an illiteracy eradication campaign was still launched. In addition to schools where literacy classes were organized, many pagodas, temples and private houses were used for literacy classes everywhere. With this flexible way after only one year (8 September 1945 - 8 September 1946), there were 95,660 people involved in teaching for 2,520,600 learners in 74,950 classes.

C. On December 19, 1946 the 9 years resistance against the French colonialists broke out. The war upset the socio-economic life and daily activities of the people therefore the Vietnamese anti-illiteracy campaign had to change its content and methods of working to be relevant with the new requirements "Resisting while Learning" in order to fulfill the duty "Eradicating illiteracy while developing education". The contents and curriculum were readjusted and supplemented according to the orientation: teaching how to read and

write, teaching arithmetic and basic scientific knowledge, and how to grow vegetables and raise animals and as well as teaching how to engage in work for the resistance for national salvation.

The main area of activity of the Anti-illiteracy campaign in that stage was moved to the rural areas. The force of anti-illiteracy personnel was supplemented quantitatively, including the men in the units of the armed forces who stayed in the rural areas, and personnel of government agencies and organization from central to local level. The body of teachers and personnel specialized in anti-illiteracy work still played a key role.

After nine years with great efforts and perseverance over 10 million people became literate, illiteracy was completely eradicated in 10 provinces, 80 districts, 1,424 communes and 7,248 villages.

D. In 1954, the North of Vietnam was completely liberated and there were still 3 million illiterate people in the age of 12-50. To help economic and education recovery and development the Government launched the illiteracy eradication campaign in 3 years (1956-1958). The Steering Boards for illiteracy eradication from central to provincial, district and communal levels were established to mobilize resources in order to ensure the success of the campaign.

After the war, the country was divided into two zones. Though there were so many socio-economic difficulties, the movement for illiteracy eradication reached its top at the end of 1958 particularly as a result of the concrete guidance from central to local level and perseverance of the body of teachers and administrators responsible for illiteracy eradication.

As a result of these, 2,161,362 became literate, among them 231,719 people in the mountainous areas and 1,929,643 people in the delta areas.

Up to January 1959 illiteracy was basically eradicated in the deltas and midlands of the North, 93% of the population in the age of 12-50 knew how to read and write while in the mountainous areas, the undertaking of illiteracy eradication was still conducted in the following years and closely linked with the movement of complementary education for the lower and upper secondary levels.

E. After the great victory in Spring 1975, the South was completely liberated. According to the data of the survey conducted in the beginning of 1976, there were over 3 million illiterate people in the whole of the South. Illiteracy eradication was regarded as an urgent task to quickly eliminate the backward status, and then facilitating the economic recovery and development after the war.

The illiteracy eradication campaign was launched in all provinces of the South. The Front for Eliminating Ignorance was established under the close leadership of the Steering Board for illiteracy eradication of all levels from central to grassroots. The effective activities of this system could mobilize the whole people to take part in the campaign. Again the teachers formed the core of the movement with the dynamic and creative method of working.

Consequently, illiteracy was eradicated in all 21 provinces and cities of the South in February 1978, where 1,323,670 people became literate satisfying 94% of the objective as proposed by above mentioned campaign. When the campaign ended, there were still many illiterate people in the mountainous provinces like Tay Nguyen and some remote areas in the Mekong River Delta, so illiteracy eradication programmes are still being implemented.

F. Still in 1990, in the whole country there were over 2 million people from 15-35 years who were illiterate and 2.3 million children in the age of 6-14 who did not go to school. At that time the number of illiterate adults in mountainous areas was 747,300 and 650,639 in Mekong River Delta provinces, comprising 38% and 33% respectively of the total illiterates in the whole country while the population of these two zones are 14% and 10% as compared with that of the whole country.

To serve the socio-economic renovation of the country, education is considered of primary importance to enhance the training

level of the people to become part of the workforce and as well as foster the talents. Therefore, at the end of 1989, the State established a National Committee for Illiteracy Eradication with the following objectives: in 1995 illiteracy will be eradicated for 1 million people; and in the year 2000 half of the number of illiterate people at present will be decreased.

Furthermore, the criteria for people to be acknowledged as literate was enhanced. Before the year 1980, a learner needed only to finish grade one but now he must pass grade three to be acknowledged as a literate. The contents, curriculum and learning materials were also revised to implement that policy.

As a result of the effective activities of the Steering Boards for illiteracy eradication from central to local levels from 1990-1993, nearly one million adults were mobilized to go to literacy classes, among them nearly 50% were acknowledged as literates according to the new criteria.

II. Orientations for the Illiteracy Eradication in the Years to Come

Notwithstanding all the above mentioned achievements, there is still a long way to go. For example, from 1990 to 1993, only 10-13% of the illiterates were mobilized to attend class and only 38% of those learners were acknowledged as literate, though all branches of all levels had actively coordinated with the branch of education and tried hard to eradicate illiteracy. Up to April 1994 only 15% of the provinces, 25% of the districts and 37% of the communes in the whole country were acknowledged to attain the national criteria on literacy and universalization of primary education.

One problem that needs attention is that 64% of the total of illiterates in the whole country center are in the less economically developed areas, with difficult living conditions and have problems in communication and transportation. For instance, the number of illiterate adults in mountainous provinces is 599, 260 and in the Mekong River Delta provinces it is 560,000 comprising 33% and 31% respectively of the total number of illiterates in the whole country.

There are also large numbers of adult illiterates among the minority groups, with the Lolo group having 96% while H'mong has 88% and the Dao, 75%.

Finally, the illiteracy rate of women is generally higher than that of men especially in the most difficult areas as can be gleaned from the Table 1.1

Table 1.1 - Number of Illiterates and Percentage of Women Illiteracy in Selected Areas in Vietnam

Area	The number of illiterates	Woman illiterates	Percentage
Midlands, mountainous area	348,734	222,115	63.69%
Tay Nguyen	106,885	79,394	74.28%
Former 4th zone	121,021	68,960	56.98%
Red River Delta	84,344	47,913	56.81%

The above mentioned situation poses a challenge which requires active policies and objectives and concrete solutions. Only by carrying out universalization of primary education, literacy and post literacy education at the same time can illiteracy be thoroughly eradicated. Therefore special attention should be paid to the mobilization of children in the school age, prevention of school drop-outs and decrease of repetition rate. At the same time, favorable conditions and high priority for illiteracy eradication should be given to the force of young laborers especially women. It is also necessary to mobilize every resource for illiteracy eradication in mountainous provinces, Mekong River Deltas, Tay Nguyen and coastal communes. From now to the year 2000, eradication of illiteracy for at least 250,000 people and organization of post-literacy courses for 200,000 people are planned.

To realize the above mentioned objectives the following solutions are proposed:

- Diversification of various forms of teaching and learning by grade/level and non grade/level. Apart from the consolidation of primary schools, alternate classes and classes at home should be strengthened.

- Encourage the literate people to teach illiterate ones.

- Organize groups of volunteers for illiteracy eradication in areas with many difficulties.

- Develop programmes of literacy education with the close and effective coordination between the education sector and other organizations such as Youth Union, Women Association, Peasants Association and Association of Veterans.

- Improve the curriculum, develop and produce adequate literacy and post-literacy materials according to the direction of linking closely the teaching to read and write with the teaching of functional knowledge appropriate to each target audience (women, peasants, workers, minority groups); in order to help them generate their income and improve living conditions.

- Provide adequate teachers specializing in illiteracy eradication in communes where there are many illiterate people.

- Strengthen the training of teachers and administrators on illiteracy eradication and continuing education.

- The Ministry of Education and Training, specifically the Department of Continuing Education, should have a plan of Action for literacy and post literacy education in 1995-2000 .

- Increase international cooperation for exchanging experience and learning from other countries, take advantage of the assistance of organizations and individuals for the illiteracy eradication in Vietnam.

Box 1.1 - BRIEF SITUATIONER OF WOMEN'S LITERACY IN BANGLADESH

Professor Jahanara Huq

Bangladesh ranks 115th out of 131 countries in its literacy status where only one third of the population over 15 are able to read or write. It is unfortunate that despite two centuries of educational efforts and investment in our past, the entire population still stands to be only marginally literate where 30% of the male population are literate with a lower 19% for women (see Table 1). Of rural women 85% are illiterate but in a functional sense most of rural female literates are also illiterates. Due to socio-cultural norms and also to long years of under privileged and socio-economically negated status, they are not allowed to go outdoors.

Although literacy and education both for boys and girls, men and women are equally important, girls' education is specifically significant. This is because female literacy has always lagged behind and has pulled back the overall national literacy achievements, if any. Moreover, female literacy and education is not only an indicator of higher social status for women, but also is a yardstick for measuring the ability of a nation, as to how best its resources can be mobilized and maneuvered towards social transformation. As half of human power, a vast reservoir of potential human capital formation, women form a singular, largest, most formidable workforce for attaining the national objectives like poverty alleviation, for autarky, EPI (expanded programme for immunization) and improved quality of life with equality.

At this point an analysis is also necessary about dwindling, definitional shifts of literacy. The concept of literacy used in various censuses has not been consistent and uniform. The 1961 census defined a literate person who could only read any language with understanding. The 1974 census defined literacy as the ability of both reading and writing in any language while the 1981 census, a person is related as literate if he/she could write a letter in any language (BBS, Statistical Pocket Book 1984-85). This definition persists until it is replaced by a new one.

The InterCensal comparison of literacy reveals some historical trends and depicts the facts that despite efforts, illiteracy among females has been appallingly high (Table 1.2). It shows that it took females about 60 years (in 1974) to catch up with the male literacy in 1911. More alarming is the increase in the absolute number of illiterates where the number of adult literates rose from 9 million in 1974 to 13 million in 1981.

While the rate of female literacy increased by 4.8% compared to that for males which was 2.5%, the number of illiterates grew from 27 million to 33 million an increase to about 20%. Thus while 4 million more people became literate, more than 6 million were added to the number of illiterates. According to one estimate the total number of illiterates in 1989 was about 70 million. Although a redeeming feature is perceivable that absolute number of literate females rose by 73% as against rise in literate males which was 32.8%.

Despite all these slow improvements, it remained true that in a study it was found that in the greater Mymensingh District in 9 Thanas about 76% families had no female schooling. In the past improvements in female literacy was 11.2% in urban areas and 0.39% in rural areas. With this improvement, the stipulated female literacy by the year 2000 would be around 20-22% which means that 80% of the females would still remain illiterate. With a very slow process it will take about 200 years to achieve universal literacy for women.

Table 1.2 - The Intercensal Comparison of Male-Female Literacy Ratio (%) in Bangladesh

Year	Male	Female
1911	13.9	1.0
1921	15.3	1.8
1931	15.4	2.9
1941	18.8	7.9
1951	33.3	11.3
1961	29.3	10.7
1974	29.9	13.7
1981	31.0	16.4
1991	30.2	19.2

Source: Compiled from Census Reports of 1951, 1961, 1974 and the Statistical Pocket Book of Bangladesh Demographic Statistics 1992

THE BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT LITERACY INITIATIVE: THE INTEGRATED NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (INFEP)

Nilufer Rahman

In order to achieve the objectives of universal primary education (UPE)/education for all (EFA), non-formal education activities have been designed to complement and strengthen the efforts in the formal education. With this end in view, in May 1992 the Integrated Non-Formal Education Programme (INFEP) was launched under the Primary and Mass Education Division (PMED). INFEP is a three year experimental project for capacity building and seeks to institutionalize a broad based system of literacy and non-formal education for children, adolescents and adults as the first step towards achieving the long-term objective of making non-formal education a complementary process in the strategy of human resources development along with formal education. This would necessitate close government-NGO collaboration and people's involvement in making millions of people, mostly living in rural areas, literate.

Under the aegis of INFEP, literacy centers have been opened in 69 thanas (sub-district) of 64 districts. Out of the total number of adult literacy centers, some of which have already closed and those which are functioning, more than fifty percent of the centers are earmarked for women learners. It may also be mentioned here that as a part of the strategy women are given preference in running literacy centers and as supervisors of these centers. They represent 54% of literacy teachers. In the proposed strategy of total literacy movement mobilizing full support of people, women would have a greater involvement in social mobilization and programmed implementation.

Post Literacy Life-long Continuing Education

Continuing Education is defined as the provision of opportunities for life-long learning. The concept of the learning society as defined by UNESCO implies that the educational processes are a function of society as a whole. All societal elements have roles to play. Life-long learning implies self-directed learning, that is men and women are the agents of their education. Agencies and resources must exist to provide the programme and the facilities needed for individuals to undertake learning projects.

Without supporting continuing education programme, neoliterates relapse into illiteracy, negating all efforts and huge investments made in the literacy programme. Therefore, for consolidating the newly acquired skills, enabling environments are to be created for the neo-literates so that they can practice their knowledge. INFEP has taken the lead in setting up to 10 villages libraries styled "Gram Shikkha Milan Kendra" in every project thana. So, far 406 village libraries have been set up in 43 thanas. There is one librarian for each library and one supervisor for 10 libraries. Librarians comprise women as well. Separate village library hours according to their convenience are maintained for women neo-literates. Besides books there is provision also for a daily newspaper, games etc.

Cognizant of the fact that female education is key to the development of the family and society and containing population growth, special emphasis has been placed on female education. To promote female education, girl students up to Class X are provided education free of charge. Government's commitment to improve both the coverage and quality of education is evident from the increasing allocations both in the revenue and development budget in recent years. Allocation for education sector in total public expenditure increased from 11% in FY 90/91 to over 16% in 1994/95. During the Fourth Five Plan period, the share of education sector in total public expenditure has been the highest and crossed

2% of GDP in 1991/92 and 3% of GDP in the FY 94/95.

Nation-wide Female Stipend Programme

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has launched an innovative programme from January 1994 for empowerment of women through education. This is a nation-wide Stipend Programme for girl students in Secondary Schools and Madrashas. The programme is being implemented through four development projects with the support of World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Norwegain Agency for Development (NORAD) and GOB (Government of Bangladesh).

The short-term objectives of the nation-wide programme are:

1. to provide stipend to female students to decrease their drop-outs from Secondary Schools/Madrashas;

2. to enhance and retain female students in the Secondary stage and thereby promote female education; and

3. to reduce growth rate by providing incentives to the stipend clientele group to refrain from marriage before completion of Secondary School Certificate Examination or before attainment of 18 years of age.

On the other hand, the long-term objectives are:

(i) empowerment of women through education;
(ii) elevation of status of women in society;
(iii) provide the women with access to work and income; and
(iv) help accelerate female human resources development.

Under the programme, besides other activities, all girl-students studying in Grade VI through Grade X receive stipends at various rates. In addition, each of the girl-students studying in Grade IX gets one time a lump-sum amount of Taka 250.00 for purchase of text books and each girl-students studying in Grade X will receive lump-sum amount Taka 250.00 for S.S.C. and Dakhil (S.S.C. equivalent) examination fee. In addition, concerned schools will receive Taka 15.00 per month as tuition fee against each of the girl-students studying in Grade IX to X.

Complimentary and Supportive Measures

To complement this, the government has also undertaken other initiatives. It has launched the Food for Education programme where boys and girls of poor families will get 18 kg wheat. This is expected to increase the enrolment rate of boys and girls. The government has also decided to establish one separate secondary school for girls in each thana (sub district). Furthermore satellite (feeder) schools especially for girls have been set up.

There is also that scheme where only one girl-child of any parent will be given the opportunity to study up to university degree level free of cost. Finally at the primary level female teachers constitute 75% and there are plans for gradual replacement of the male teachers by female teachers.

Box 1.2 - **BRIEF SITUATIONER OF WOMEN'S LITERACY IN INDIA**

Anita Dighe

Longitudinal literacy statistics show considerable improvement in the educational scenario in the country where overall, the literacy rate increased from 28% in 1961 to 52% percent in 1991. However, these figures obscure disparities in literacy in terms of gender, regions and minority groups.

Women constitute the largest group among the adult non-literate population in India. Though the female literacy rate (age group 7 years and above) has gone up from 9% in 1951 to 39% in 1991, India still has a vast non-literate female population. The magnitude of the problem of illiteracy can be gauged if one looks at the absolute number of non-literate women where in 1991, there were 329 million non-literates of which women numbered 200 million. A comparison with Census data two decades earlier shows that the absolute numbers of non-literate women have increased considerably over time.

Despite recognition by policy planners that the problem of illiteracy is grave amongst women, women's literacy has never received the priority attention it deserves. For gender disparities in literacy have continued to exist, with male literacy rate being consistently ahead of female literacy rate

While gender disparities have continued in most states, there are, however, certain regional variations. The disparities are far wider in the four northern states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. There are also intra-district differences. In fact, the largest number of districts with high gender disparities between rural males and females are concentrated in the four states mentioned above.

Besides the urban/rural and regional disparities, there are certain sections of the population, such as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes that also have low levels of female literacy. The educational status of women in certain minority groups such as Muslims, is also dismal.

The problem of women's illiteracy has been exacerbated due to low enrollment and high drop-out rates among girls who enter the formal schools. While the enrollment of girls has shown a steady increase, it is still not commensurate with the enrolment rate of boys. The drop-out rate among girls, particularly those who live in rural areas, continues to be very high. Once again, it is the four states mentioned above that have overall low enrolment and high drop-out rates among girls.

Until the late seventies, literacy programmes, both for men and women, tended to be adhoc, short-term, and limited in scope. It was only in 1979 that a nation-wide programme - the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) - was launched. While NAEP acknowledged the severity of the problem of illiteracy among women, no specific programmatic interventions were designed for them. With the launching of the National Policy on Education in 1986 and its subsequent revision in 1992, the problem of gender inequalities in education received concrete attention for the first time in India. Thus the policy document has unequivocally stated that education should play 'a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women'.

The recognition of inequalities in education led to the formulation of Mahila Samakhya Programme that is now in operation on a limited scale in five states of the country. Mahila Samakhya is an innovative approach aimed at raising women's consciousness on their marginalization and deprivation in the family and in society at large. Experience has shown that as women have become empowered at the personal and collective levels, they have experienced the need for literacy. In contrast, the Total literacy Campaigns (TLCs) have now become operational in more than 250 districts in the country. While the Mahila Samakhya approach is slow, process-oriented and allows women to seek literacy as and when they feel the need for it, the TLC strategy is to deal exclusively with imparting skills of reading, writing and numeracy to the non-literates, most of whom are women. By and large, TLCs have paid little attention to specific issues relating to' women's literacy. The TLCs are implemented in a campaign mode, and gender issues so far have not been consciously built either in the planning or in the implementation phases.

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Box 1.3 - **LITERACY POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN IN THE PHILIPPINES**

The Philippine Development Plan for Women for the period 1989-1992 manifests the Philippine Government's commitment to bring into mainstream the concerns of women in the development process. It operationalized the development policies of government into gender-specific policy statements, programs and projects aimed at addressing the equality and developmental issues of women in the different sectors and within their social concerns. Here literacy is viewed as the key to the improvement of Filipino women.

On the other hand, the EFA Philippine Plan of Action for 1990-1999 focuses its policies and strategies on specific groups, including women. It expects to bring basic education to women though non-traditional methods and mechanisms. The primary goal of basic education is to meet basic learning needs or the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary for people to survive, to improve the quality of their lives, and to continue learning.

Programmatically, the Functional Literacy component of the nonformal education of DECS is being widely conducted in the country. Its target clientele includes out-of-school youth and adults (male and female) with different literacy levels. It utilizes the literacy materials based on the needs, interests and competencies of women, including adolescent girls.

Focusing on women's literacy is viewed as an investment of an unquantifiable value. The returns of this investment can be the most effective use of the country's limited resources, a more balanced growth in the labor force, security for Filipino families, and the possibility for better health, education, nutrition and personal development not only for women but for all people.

Making women functionally literate will help them gain courage and confidence in themselves, so that they would understand the causes of injustice and find the strength to change their way of life.

The Female Functional Literacy and Parent Education Project, an inter-agency endeavor which commenced under the Third Country Program for Children and is being expanded under the Fourth Country Program for Children, targets women and girls in areas with very low literacy rates. It seeks to address the problems of child survival and development through strengthening nonformal education to promote effective parenting and more effective utilization of health, including prevention and early detection and childhood disabilities. These are integrated into the curriculum, training design and educational materials of existing major NFE functional literacy programs.

Certain measures in favor of women are being observed by DECS and its partners in literacy promotion. These include:

(i) development of instructional materials dealing with subjects of interest to female learners;

(ii) encouraging female participation in community affairs;

(iii) providing a forum for parent education, values clarification, moral recovery and effective leadership of women; and

(iv) providing materials and financial assistance to livelihood development of women and their families.

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HISTORY OF LITERACY EFFORTS AND CURRENT POLICIES ON WOMEN'S LITERACY

Rose Sese

The purpose of this paper is to share the historical path of literacy efforts in the Philippines. In the process, government efforts under the Asia-Pacific Programme of Education For All (APPEAL) and under the global movement Education for All (EFA) will be dealt with. It will also touch on the current efforts on literacy skills development, the issues attendant to the full realization of the intent of these efforts and future actions that may be done to achieve EOI. A priority group in all these efforts are illiterate women and girls. Finally this paper shall try to highlight the activities of the LCC in the pursuit of the present government's goal of people empowerment.

I. HISTORY OF LITERACY EFFORTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Conscious efforts at literacy skills development in the country dates back to 1906. The American colonial government wanted to find out who was literate in English and gave an examination. Those who passed were given jobs in the government as clerks, aides or assistants.

This became a motivating factor that resulted in the increased enrolment in the elementary schools. There were, however, those who for some reasons could not participate in the formal education programs. So, in 1908 the Philippine Legislature passed Act. No. 1829 requiring municipal teachers to take charge of lectures on Saturdays, Sundays or after school hours to develop literacy skills in English. In 1914, Act. No. 1829 was amended by Act. No. 2424 allowing lectures by teacher even on school days. Subject of the lectures were expanded to include laws on mining and industry, animal breeding and care, and propagation of plants and trees. There are no records, however, that show the extent of participation of farmers in these lectures.

In May 1935, the Constitution of the Commonwealth of the Philippines was ratified in a national plebiscite. Among, the provisions of this Constitution was one on adult education, embodied in Section 5, Article XIV, portion of which is quoted as follows:"Government shall provide ... citizenship training to adult citizens."

The University of the Philippines took the lead in implementing this provision by organizing the President's Committee on Literacy and Civic Education. Under this project, more than 300 faculty and alumni of the university volunteered to teach functional literacy to adults in their homes. After a year, the volunteers reported more than 1,000 adults made literate. They then opened a special course in adult education, and an adult class served as a laboratory for students.

On October 26, 1936, the National Assembly passed Commonwealth Act. No. 80 which created the Office of Adult Education under the Office of the President. Its functions, among others were to:

1. Initiate and conduct surveys to determine the extent and distribution of illiteracy among adults;
2. Enlist the interest and cooperation of organizations on adult education activities;
3. Prepare a comprehensive program for adult education;
4. Organize and supervise schools and classes for adults;
5. Disseminate cultural and vocational information; and
6. Train teachers and community organizations for adult education work.

By 1940, a number of adult literacy classes were organized in provinces utilizing the adult education workers connected with the Office of the Governor.

In 1947, the Office of Adult Education was transferred to the Bureau of Public Schools of the Department of Education. It was in recognition of out-of-school education as one of the concerns of the education agency. After a year, the Office recorded a 52 percent literacy rate of a total population of 19,234,182. It adopted other strategies in adult literacy education. Earliest among these was the each-one-teach-one plan where every teacher was required to make at least one illiterate adult in his/her neighborhood literate.

Initially, reports on literacy gains seemed very impressive. Later, however, some reports were found to be inaccurate, as some adults were already literate in the dialect at least.

Through the 1950s, the Adult Education Division managed programs and projects designed to achieve literacy gains. By 1960, the Census and Statistics Office reported an increase of 20 percent over the 1948 literacy rate. Still, the focus of educational development were child education and adult literacy. An intensive six-year literacy campaign (1966-1972) was mounted with the 15-35 age group of out-of-school youths and adults as primary targets.

The strategy in this campaign was to require every complete elementary school, to make at least 30 illiterate adults and out-of-school youths literate; every public secondary school to make literate every year at least 40 illiterate adults and out-of-school youths; and each of the seven regional teacher training colleges to organize two classes in adult literacy with an enrolment of at least 30 in each class every year for the duration of the campaign.

Various schemes were used in conducting literacy classes such as:

- Team teaching where three or more teachers of agriculture or industrial arts, health and nutrition or a municipal health nurse teamed up with a teacher of reading and writing to conduct a course for adults.

- Assignment of a teacher without a full academic load to handle adult literacy classes;

- Availing of services of teachers from outside groups in helping conduct classes and recruiting out-of-school illiterates and semi-literates to participate in the class; and

- Utilizing high school and college students undergoing off-campus training to help teach the adult illiterate.

Through the 1970s, the focus of educational development was on minimizing drop-outs anywhere in the country. In 1977, the Office of the Deputy Minister for Nonformal Education was created by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 1139. The new Office had seven major programs one of which was Functional Literacy. In all the other program areas, literacy was always a component.

By 1980, nonformal education programs were in full swing in the field. The literacy rate increased to more than 87 percent according to NCSO figures.

Table 1.3 - Literacy of Population 15 years and above in the Philippines

Years	Total Pop./15 yrs. up	Number of Literate	Percentage of Literate
1960	18,145,872*	13.074,748	72
1970	16,047,078	11,820,863	75
1980	24,028,291	20,950,508	87

* 1960 figures were based on population 10 years and above; for other years, it is 15 years and above; all figures from the Bureau of Census and Statistics.

Data on literacy rates over time showed a consistently high trend; 83.4% in 1970, 82.7% in 1980, and 89,8% in 1989 (NSO, October 26, 1990). However the number of nonliterate Filipinos, 10 years and above, increased in the last decade by over 450 thousand between 1980 and 1989, from approximately 5.8 million to 6.25 million respectively. Within and across regions, there were gaps in literacy rates with Region XII and Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) accounting for the bulk of nonliterates. There were also discrepancies between the simple literacy rate and the more revealing functional literacy rates, which cover not only the ability to read and write, but also numeracy and minimum skills to carry out simple functions in life. Simple literacy rates improved in all regions from 82.7% in 1980 to 89.89% on 1989. However, functional literacy rates were lower than 75% in 10 out of 15 regions (national average was 73.2%).

In 1986, in response to the Asia-Pacific call for visible changes in the regional educational system, the Asia-Pacific Programme Of Education For All (APPEAL) was launched. A National Coordinating Committee was organized and this Committee held a series of field consultations to review the state-of-the-practice by analyzing the present scenario in the problem areas, identifying the concerns and issues, the present intervention programs and the linkages for integration, coordination and collaboration along the areas of universalizing primary education and enhancing relevance and efficiency in the area of APPEAL's concerns. From those leaders and practitioners' inputs a five-year program was conceived as a pilot program to provide a more research-oriented baseline for the remaining eight years towards the year 2000.

The five-year program of APPEAL in the Philippines aims to pilot a research-oriented scheme for the eradication of illiteracy in the year 2000 through a design scheme, Development, Diffusion and Evaluation and a corresponding organizational structure consisting of the task (the mission and purpose); people (functions and responsibilities); a technology of delivery system (a national measures and resources) and a structure (a national network of communication mechanism).

Specifically, this five-year program aims to

- establish a national organizational structure composed of the different regions in both public and private sectors across the country;
- pilot a scheme of research, development, diffusion, implementation and continuous evaluation scheme for development towards eradication of illiteracy, universalization of primary education and providing for continuing education.
- undertake a comprehensive review and documentation of the state-of-the-practice in the three foregoing areas in this country.
- establish and maintain an organizational structure that will take care of the implementation of the proposed five-year program and the sustained enhancement of relevance, efficiency, equity and effectiveness through this program.
- maintain a continuous monitoring, evaluation and improvement mechanism within the program with a vision of providing baseline data for the subsequent program for the year 1991 to 2000.
- continuously consolidate regional efforts in both government and non-government entities across the country.

APPEAL in the Philippines was vitalized with the advent of the global movement, Education For All (EFA).

In 1989, President Corazon C. Aquino issued Proclamation No. 480 declaring the period 1990 to 1999 as the "Decade of Education for All". This called for the development of the Philippine Plan of Action on Education For All (PPA), which presented the programs and projects for each of the four areas corresponding to the four

- objectives of EFA: Institutionalization of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD); Universalization of Quality Primary Education (QUPE); Development and Strengthening of the Alternative Learning Systems (ALS); which covers two subprograms: Eradication of Illiteracy (EOI) and Continuing Education and Development (CED). Under EOI, the following specific policies and strategies were formulated:

1. Integration of literacy programs with other development initiatives;

2. Mutual reinforcement among pre-literacy, literacy and post-literacy programs;

3. Improvement of the internal efficiency of literacy programs;

4. Establishment of a comprehensive system of locating, identifying and monitoring the status of nonliterates in critical areas;

5. Increased emphasis on the needs of special groups of learners;

6. Active participation of institutions of higher learning in the development and promotion of literacy;

7. Mobilization of various groups in literacy programs;

8. Stronger emphasis on awareness and consciousness raising in literacy and continuing education programs as vehicles to discuss relevant topics like gender biases, environmental care, science culture, peace and development, etc.

Underlining the importance of literacy under the EFA-PPA, RA 7165 was approved into law in 1991. Also known as *an act creating the literacy coordinating council, defining its powers and functions, appropriating funds therefore and for other purposes*, the LCC serves as an overall advisory and coordinating body for all literacy endeavors in the country.

Through the initiatives of the Council, two policy insurances towards EOI in the Philippines were signed by the President of the Philippines: (1) Proclamation No. 239, declaring September 2 to 8 of every year as Literacy Week; and (2) Memorandum Circular No. 71 entitled "Strengthening the Resolve to Eradicate Illiteracy by the Year 2000". This involves the LCC, its member agencies and other GOs and the NGOs in carrying out specific responsibilities related in the eradication of illiteracy.

II. CURRENT EFFORTS

A. Researches

To provide concrete program and project directions, and to improve the design and delivery of its functional literacy programs, researches have been commissioned by the Literacy Coordinating Council and the Bureau of Nonformal Education.

1. **Learning From Life: An Ethnographic of Functional Literacy In Fourteen Philippine Communities**. Done by the University of the Philippines-Education Research Program (UP-ERP) under the direction of Dr. Ma. Luisa C. Doronila, Director of UP-ERP, the objectives of the study are

- To explore the general issues and problems leading to a clearer understanding and conceptualization of functional literacy;

- To understand the nature of community life in various community types in order to contextualize the functional literacy programs;

- To propose content areas for the development of these functional literacy programs and the relevant instructional materials;

- To provide some empirical bases for the technical considerations related to the teaching and evaluation of functional literacy, acquisition, retention and loss of literacy skills

- To propose a general framework for the planning, implementation and sustainability of functional literacy programs.

From this main study, the UP-ERP is presently pursuing nine (9) related studies that will guide project proponents in the development and implementation of literacy programs. These are:

a. *Pre-Implementation Rapid Community Assessment and Training at the Community Level.*

b. *Preparation of a package of instruments derived from the Ethnographic study to be used by implementing agencies as preparation for the implementation of the project at the community level.*

c. *Taxonomies for Functional Education and Literacy Program.*

This study is expected to produce a taxonomy of functional skills by occupation and by community type, as well as additional skills needed by people to compete in the world of work and to use new technology.

d. *Community knowledge in Various Phil. Community Types*

The primary objectives of the study are: (1) to expand the preliminary compendium of community knowledge from the six types of marginal communities generated through the 1993 Ethnographic study on Functional Literacy in 14 Philippine Communities; 2) to validate the scientific bases of this knowledge; and 3) to classify the community knowledge according to subject areas for use of the writers of exemplar modules.

e. *Development and Field Testing of Exemplar and Instructional Materials for FELP*

The principal objective of this study is to develop program materials utilizing the research outputs of the Ethnographic Study for the use of Functional Education and Literacy Program (FELP).

f. *Preliminary Inventory of Existing Literacy Materials*

This study involves an inventory and assessment of relevant existing literacy materials in all regions, including those materials developed by the BNFE, Government and Non-government organizations and Higher Education Institutions.

g. *Development and Standardization of Basic and Functional Literacy Tests I-IV and Refinement of Psycho-social Scales*

This study will develop, standardize and administer instruments to a national sample to measure their Basic and Functional Literacy Status, psycho-social characteristics, educational and skills qualifications; categorize the semi-literate, completely literate to functionally literate clientele and the determine the specific level of the population.

h. *Cognitive Consequences of Literacy: case studies of neo-literates from nonformal literacy programs*

This case study analyzes the effects of literacy training on the individual. This will also be a significant input into the development of equivalency tests.

i. *Indigenous Learning Systems*

Preliminary research on indigenous learning knowledge and strategies useful for literacy work in two tribal communities, Sama of Tawi-Tawi and the Cordillera tribal group.

2. Literacy Mapping

The National Statistics Office was commissioned by the Literacy Coordinating Council to identify the non-literates in all the

households in the communities identified in the ADB-NFE Project.

The survey sought to find the answers to the following questions:

- Who are these illiterates?
- Why are they illiterate?
- In which level of illiteracy do they belong? (Levels 1, 2 or 3)?
- Where are these illiterates located? (Municipality and Barangay)
- What are their problems?
- What can they do about their problems?
- What locally available resources can they harness to solve their problems?

The results of the study was meant to complement the findings of the Ethnographic Study for the development of innovative intervention programs and strategies in literacy skills development.

B. Programs and Projects

1. ADB-NFE Project

To speed up the implementation of functional literacy projects, the Asian Development Bank is funding a five year nonformal education project. The project will be implemented in nine administrative regions, twenty-four provinces, one hundred twenty-three municipalities and one thousand seven hundred forty barangays. Its objectives are:

- reduce the incidence of basic and functional illiteracy in the targeted areas;
- strengthen the system of NFE equivalency testing and accreditation for adults and out-of-school youth
- develop a body of locally-adapted learning materials for literacy and self-learning programs for the poor
- expand the outreach and effectiveness of community-based NFE through interagency coordination
- strengthen DECS monitoring, research and evaluation capacity to assess NFE and formulated policies.

2. Regular basic and functional literacy programs, such as:

- Eradication of illiteracy in Selected Areas (EISA): Ifugao, Tawi-Tawi and other areas implemented the project with funding assistance from the UNICEF in coordination with local government executives.
- Female Functional Literacy and Parent Education (FFLPE) Ifugao, Negros Occidental, Sulu, Basialan, Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Samar Provinces, Cotabato and others is a community-based project and was especially designed for women and girls in particular and parents in general. The focus is maternal and child health and funded by the UNICEF in coordination with local government executives.
- Project UNLAD - Botolan, Zambales is a literacy project involving Aeta families displaced with the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. It is a joint effort between and among the DECS, UNICEF, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Mercy Corp and Translator's Association of the Philippines.
- Literacy programs being implemented by the DECS with funding from the government. All regions run this program. The program is mostly school-based because the facilitators are elementary grades teachers.

III. ISSUES

Whereas the Philippines has made great strides in its efforts towards EOI, there are still some problems and issues that this writer feels must be resolved for smoother implementation of functional literacy programs.

A. *Utilization of research findings*

Efforts must be exerted to operationalize the issue. It is felt that project managers will have to train their staff to make full use of research findings for more responsive program designers.

A dissemination and mobilization program may also encourage NGOs to use these findings.

B. *Structure for literacy project implementation*

The UNESCO, through APPEAL and EFA, has proposed the grand alliance between GOs, and NGOs. The GOs are made up of line agencies concerned with social development programs of the government. In reality, this grand alliance has not been fully operationalized.

It is suggested that this structure be reviewed to find out how it can function more efficiently and effectively.

C. *Community-based literacy programs*

Most often, the community members are not the main actors in the program. Therefore they do not develop close kinship with the program.

The community may be made the focal force in problem identification, program development and program implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

D. *Role of Local Government Executives (LGE)*

A Philippine study showed that the LGEs do not consider literacy as part of their development responsibility. There is in the Philippines a memorandum circular (71) signed by the President making the LGEs responsible for EOI in their area of responsibility but the LGEs are not aware of this.

Close consultation with LGEs may be done to make them aware of their role in EOI. Social mobilization is also suggested.

E. *Lack of full time literacy facilitators*

As mentioned before, literacy skills development is mostly done by the school system. Whereas there are NGOs doing this, their organization is not as big as that of the DECS.

However, because this is mostly added work, the efforts for literacy skills development still have to be improved.

The Bureau of Nonformal Education was informed that there are some 2,000 items for NFE coordinators being proposed in the CY 1996 budget. If approved, this will be of great help to EOI.

F. *Lack of a functional monitoring and evaluation sub-program*

Ideally, each program/project is expected to have a built-in monitoring program. This enables the project staff and decision-makers to effect changes and modification in program content, strategies and other resource adjustment. This is, however seldom the case.

It would benefit the project to develop this as early as the project development stage.

Evaluation takes its cue from the monitoring results. Monitoring and evaluation are complimentary. Evaluation may be done internally by project staff or externally by a commissioned body. The findings are very useful input to future related projects.

IV. FUTURE ACTION

A. The LCC is in the process of **planning a national congress on literacy** where some of the more pressing issues and possible solutions may be proposed.

This will be followed by consultations with local government executive of LGUs where the rate of illiteracy is high. One of the expected outcomes from these consultations is local legislation that will enable LGUs to include EOI in their local development plans.

B. Strengthen the structure for the delivery of literacy programs

The inter-agency approach to EOI has to be made operational. Clear strategies for interfacing of roles must be done. The IAC must be made to think and work as one instead of clinging to their respective turf.

C. Mid-Term review of EFA programs and structures

It is five years before the year 2000. Between its inception in 1990 to date, there have been a number of local and global developments that necessitated the shift of focus in development priorities.

A closer look into these circumstances may provide the chance for program updates or program modification to render EFA responsive to the changing times.

Let us remember that EOI is one of the centerpieces of EFA. A more responsive EFA plan spells a more responsive EOI program.

ENGENDERING ADULT LITERACY

David Clarke

The 1995 Human Development Report asserts that the human development paradigm must be engendered to achieve the goal of gender equality. The same report comments that rapid progress has been made in the past two decades but this has been uneven between countries and regions. Overall women's literacy increased in the period 1970-90 from 54% of the male rate to 74%, an increase that was double that of the male rate. Yet the battle is far from won, as a glance at the literacy rates for the countries with Low Human Development ranking reveals, almost invariably, a below 50% adult literacy rate with significant gender disparities. In South Asia alone, there are an estimated 380 million non-literates, the majority of whom are women. Few would deny the importance of tackling illiteracy to reduce poverty, promote gender equity and assist sustainable development, yet the scale of the task is enormous and it is open to question that the problem is being addressed with sufficient commitment in development policies and practice.

While the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) has raised the profile of basic education and 'literacy for all' in development policies and donor assistance, Wagner (1995) reports that observers have noticed 'the considerable reticence of many national, bilateral and international agencies to provide strong fiscal (as contrasted with rhetorical) support for adult literacy efforts.'

This possible neglect of investment in literacy requires further investigation and confirmation, but a cursory examination of development activity in basic education suggests that there is at least a prima facie case for this proposition. A major factor is that governments and donors appear to have taken the long term view in eliminating illiteracy and are in the process of investing in increased access to primary education as the main route to universal literacy. This is what I would term the economists' solution to the problem, since it appears to be the lowest cost approach. But does it fully take into account the problems of primary completion and the ways in which this is gendered? In this regard, are the factors which result in school drop out sufficiently understood and considered- in particular, the effect of non-literate parents/mothers on school-going?

Pursuing the question of gendered literacy, the Delhi Declaration (UNESCO: 1994) adopted by the Education for All Summit of Nine High-Population Developing Countries identifies gender as the greatest source of disparity in access to basic education. Moreover, where there has been a pattern of boy-girl differences in primary school enrolment and completion, adult literacy rates show a marked gender gap. To address the problem the Delhi Declaration cites the need for a dual approach to achieve basic education for all: i) expanding primary school enrolment and completion rates, and ii) providing well-targeted functional literacy programmes to adolescents and adults who have missed out on school. Interestingly, there is no mention of the need for targeting women even though it is acknowledged later on in the document that educated women are more likely to send their children to school and keep them there. Instead the approach advocated entails a focus on providing basic education programmes for adolescents and young adults, especially mothers. The rationale for this is, that given the scarcity of resources, it is better to target the more highly motivated in order to achieve maximum impact. The question of motivation is a dubious one; needs surely should be the priority. It does imply a lack of confidence in adult literacy programmes and this may prove to be an unstated cause for reluctance to invest. The implication of this policy, however, is that access to basic education for all will be possible only at primary school.

This approach is understandable as governments usually have a functioning primary education system which can be expanded relatively straightforwardly provided financial resources are available; institutions which deliver adult literacy have seldom been developed on the same scale and perhaps lack the legitimacy of primary schooling. There is the widely held perception that adult literacy programmes do not work efficiently or effectively. For example, adult literacy is characterized as a problem-ridden area by Abadzi (1994). She states that adult literacy programmes have yielded disappointing results worldwide, in contrast to children's education. They are subject to high drop-out rates (50% on average), low levels of achievement (about 50% of those who complete the programmes fail to meet terminal performance criteria) and relapse into illiteracy appears to be widespread if there are no opportunities to practice literacy skills in the community. As a result of this ineffectiveness literacy had virtually disappeared from World Bank projects by the end of the 1980s. The 1990 World Conference on Education for All has arguably resulted in a minor resurgence of Bank lending for literacy projects in Ghana, Indonesia and Bangladesh (ibid). Nevertheless, adult literacy remains very much an educational Cinderella.

The development of more effective literacy programmes has been hindered by a lack of investment in research into literacy acquisition; Bown (1990) states that women's literacy is an utterly under-researched area. Abadzi (ibid) claims that due to this lack, it is largely unknown what characteristics make adults more amenable to literacy training. Another factor is the poor quality of teaching, lacking effective classroom management, participatory techniques and active learning, and periodic evaluation of learning. This may reflect the relatively low professional status of literacy practitioners and the lack of financial investment in non-formal education. It may also suggest that poor women are accorded a low priority in development policy and practice.

If educators generally have taken relatively little interest in adult literacy, gender specialists have also paid scant regard to the problem of female illiteracy or indeed to female education. Ostergaard (1992) contains little reference to female education let alone literacy, likewise Moser (1993), Kabeer (1994) and Elson (1991). This lack of attention to the consequences of illiteracy for the lives of women represents a lost opportunity to raise the profile of women's literacy programmes and to promote the strategic interests of poor women and their children.

Writing in 1990, Bown, noted that while there had been a considerable amount of rhetoric about women's literacy, there had not been substantial funding from donors. Among her recommendations were that a target be set for a percentage of the UK aid budget to be spent on literacy and that NGOs should include an element of women's literacy in all projects. Setting spending targets for aid programmes is deeply problematic, while integrating literacy in all projects is perhaps rendered more difficult by a shortage of technical expertise in the field, particularly in interdisciplinary frameworks e.g fisheries or agriculture and literacy. In 1995, it is reasonably safe to assert that there has been no significant allocation of donor resources to women's literacy, despite the wealth of evidence attesting to the resultant benefits in terms of economic and social effects (Bown, 1990 - Stromquist, 1995).

Is the lack of focus on female literacy yet more evidence of male bias in the development process? I fear that it is. The culture that has created the gender differential in literacy often stands in the way of remediation. At the levels of family and community, female literacy programmes may encounter male resistance, particularly if it threatens the gendered status quo. Governments, which are characteristically male-dominated, may lack the political will to promote the status of women in such a context. If they fail to provide the policy and planning framework for providing female literacy programmes, it then becomes extremely important for donors to assist on

a significant scale, for to do otherwise would be to risk a donor-driven approach, which experience has proven to be a certain recipe for failure.

The safest strategy, politically, to increase female literacy is to aim to improve the enrolment and retention of girls at school. This can be done without much overt reference to gender which is invariably a sensitive issue among traditionalists. Whether it is the most efficient and effective approach remains open to question. Given the low level of efficiency to be found in many developing countries primary education systems, there will continue to be female drop outs and low achievers. The Delhi Declaration, in advocating the dual approach argues against investing in primary education only, although I would argue that the document does not go sufficiently far in addressing the educational needs of illiterate women.

What will it take then to increase the resourcing of female literacy programmes?

The following measures are suggested:

- research into the factors that promote female literacy and its use;
- disaggregation of funding by donors for female adult literacy in reporting on aid activities;
- investment in institutional capacity to develop literacy programmes;
- support for innovative approaches to women's literacy programmes which can be shown to be more effective in delivering literacy skills;
- closer co-operation between social development/gender and education/ literacy specialists in policy formulation and project planning;
- closer linkage between literacy programmes and primary education.

In conclusion, there appears to be an ongoing need to advocate increased resourcing for women's education. This is likely to be met when there is a genuine commitment on the part of governments to improve the life opportunities of the poor. To achieve this, what is required is long term planning by governments in particular, but also by donors and NGOs to provide an effective policy framework and enabling environment to equip all women with functional literacy skills in the shortest possible time-frame.

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Table 1.4 - ILLITERACY RATES IN ASIA

COUNTRY OR TERRITORY	Estimated number of adult illiterates				Estimated adult illiteracy rate (%)		
	1980		1995		1995		
	Total (000)	%F	Total (000)	%F	**Total**	**Male**	**Female**
Afghanistan	7 351	57	8 169	60	68.5	52.8	85.0
Armenia	58	85	10	66	0.4	0.3	0.5
Azerbaijan	111	86	18	66	0.4	0.3	0.5
Bahrain	63	54	56	55	14.8	10.9	20.6
Bangladesh	33 551	57	45 082	58	61.9	50.6	73.9
Bhutan	532	59	558	62	57.8	43.8	71.9
Brunei Darussalam	27	65	22	67	11.8	7.4	16.6
Cambodia	---	---	---	---	-	-	-
China	218 848	68	166 173	72	18.5	10.1	27.3
Cyprus	---	---	---	---	-	-	-
Dem. People's Rep. of Korea	---	---	---	---	-	-	-
Georgia	149	87	19	71	0.4	0.3	0.6
Hong Kong	520	78	370	74	7.8	4.0	11.8
India	250 592	61	290 705	63	48.0	34.5	62.3
Indonesia	28 325	66	21 507	68	16.2	10.4	22.0
Iran, Islamic Rep. of	11 027	61	11 926	64	31.4	22.3	40.7
Iraq	4 188	62	4 848	65	42.0	29.3	55.0
Israel	---	---	---	---	-	-	-
Japan	---	---	---	---	-	-	-
Jordan	464	71	414	75	13.4	6.6	20.6
Kazakstan	310	87	45	68	0.4	0.3	0.5
Kuwait	264	49	200	59	21.4	17.8	25.1
Kyrgyzstan	70	87	11	66	0.4	0.3	0.5
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	1 083	62	1 170	66	43.4	30.6	55.6
Lebanon	222	67	151	67	7.6	5.3	9.7
Malaysia	2 400	67	2 057	67	16.5	10.9	21.9
Maldives	9	50	9	49	6.8	6.7	7.0
Mongolia	261	67	256	67	17.1	11.4	22.8
Myanmar	4 727	69	4 913	67	16.9	11.3	22.3
Nepal	6 784	56	9 149	59	72.5	59.1	86.0
Oman	---	---	---	---	-	-	-
Pakistan	34 575	56	48 693	58	62.2	50.0	75.6
Palestine							
Gaza Strip	---	---	---	---	-	-	-
West Bank	---	---	---	---	-	-	-
Philippines	2 911	55	2 234	53	5.4	5.0	5.7
Qatar	47	36	82	27	20.6	20.8	20.1
Republic of Korea	1 566	79	697	82	2.0	0.7	3.3
Saudi Arabia	2 786	57	3 871	55	37.2	28.5	49.8
Singapore	301	75	196	77	8.9	4.1	13.7
Sri Lanka	1 410	68	1 241	67	9.8	6.6	12.8
Syrian Arab Republic	2 073	70	2 259	75	29.2	14.3	44.2
Tajikistan	58	84	11	63	0.3	0.3	0.4
Thailand	3 297	68	2 613	68	6.2	4.0	8.4
Turkey	9 384	73	7 231	76	17.7	8.3	27.6
Turkmenistan	42	85	8	63	0.3	0.2	0.4
United Arab Emirates	219	29	272	29	20.8	21.1	20.2
Uzbekistan	259	85	45	64	0.3	0.2	0.4
Viet Nam	5 133	72	2 916	73	6.3	3.5	8.8
Yemen	---	---	---	---	-	-	-
Former Dem. Yemen	---	---	---	---	-	-	-
Former Yemen Arab Rep.	---	---	---	---	-	-	-

Source: World Education Report 1995 - UNESCO Publishing Oxford

CHAPTER II

LITERACY PRACTICES AND THEIR PROMISE OF EMPOWERING WOMEN

EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR WOMEN - A CASE STUDY OF MAHILA SAMAKHYA, BANDA

Mahila Samakhya, Banda District, Uttar Pradesh
And Nirantar, New Delhi

This paper is a case study of the Mahila Samakhya programme in Banda District of Uttar Pradesh and documents the different educational interventions and innovative processes that have been carried out in the area of women's education in Banda. It also describes how these initiatives have been sustained, continually renewed and diversified over the past five years.

In retrospect the evolution and growth of the educational work in Banda can be seen in three phases. These are of course not strictly linear in relationship but rather circular, interactive and reflexive. They constitute a process and for the most part proceed together. In the initial phase an environment for education was created and the first few concrete literacy-related interventions were initiated (literacy camps and centers). The second phase consisted of sustaining these initiatives and new innovative experiments, particularly in the area of material production. In the third and current phase a concrete long term strategy and programme is being worked on to incorporate the growing and varied educational needs of the area in the form of a residential educational center for women (Mahila Shikshan Kendra).

The paper is structured as follows. *Section 1* provides a background to the programme and the area. *Section 2* describes the different interventions in the programmes the initial phase. *Section 3* deals with the strategies evolved to sustain and board-base the educational programme. *Section 4* deals with the emerging learning needs and the new initiatives undertaken to meet them.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE MAHILA SAMAKHYA PROGRAMME

Mahila Samakhya (Mahila Samakhya) programme was launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of Education) in 1989 as an innovative project in three different states of India-Uttar Pradesh, Gujrat and Kamataka[1]. In the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, the Mahila Samakhya programme is operational in four districts Varanasi, Saharanpur, Tehri Garhwal and Banda.

Drawing on the perspective spelled out in National Policy on Education in 1986, the Mahila Samakhya programme was conceived as an educational programme that would play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. Briefly, Mahila Samakhya viewed education as an empowering processes that would initiate a process of change in the life situation of poor rural women. Moving away from the dominant mainstream perspective that "literacy equals education", in Mahila Samakhya awareness, building self confidence and a sense of self, collective action, access to information, developing a critical understanding of their life situation were seen as integral to an education programme for women[2].

Banda District: A Brief Profile

In Banda District the programme was initiated in approximately 100 villages spread over two administrative blocks, Tindwari and Manikpur. The programme has since spread to an additional 100 villages. Work has begun in a third block as well.

Banda is one of the more backward districts in India. A significant proportion (23%) of the population is tribal (KOL) and schedule caste. In Manikpur block where the programme is primarily based, the concentration is higher (30%). The dominant caste group of the region are the landed upper caste Thakurs who own and control a large part of the agriculture land[3]. The

mainstay of the economy is rain-fed subsistence agriculture. In Manikpur there is high level of dependence on the forests and on forest produce for survival. Agricultural labor is an important wage earning activity. As industry or other alternative sources of employment are almost completely absent in the region, migration during the lean agricultural periods is not uncommon.

Social indicators of development reflect a similar scenario. About two-thirds of the population of Banda District is illiterate. The extent of illiteracy is even higher among women and lower castes. The already low female district literacy rate (16%) drops drastically to a mere 8% in Manikpur block. There are many villages in the block where it is difficult to locate even a single literate woman. This clearly has serious implications in terms of initiating and sustaining an educational programme.

Perhaps a revealing indicator of the abysmal status of women in the district is the population's sex ratio of 842 women to 1000 men. Despite the shocking statistic, the figure conceals the horror that the combination of poverty and violence spells for women in Banda. Violence in Banda is constantly manifested in the nexus between highly organized gangs of dacoits, the state apparatus (police, forest, officials, etc.), the upper caste landlords and the political parties. And then there is the equally routine violence against women within the families which in this area often takes grotesque forms-burning, murder etc.

Any intervention, educational or otherwise, must be seen within the context of the situation described above.

2. EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTIONS: THE INITIAL PHASE

From the outset literacy was never a stated objective of the programme. How could it be, given the desperate socio-economic and women's situation in the area. Mahila Samakhya concentrated on building among the women a critical understanding of their life situation. Through collective processes of learning and reflection women were encouraged to think, speak and actively seek changes. Village level women's groups were formed to take the process forward.

The decision to steer clear of "padai likhai" (reading-writing) was not out of choice. Education or literacy at that stage was never a priority with the women. In meeting after meeting when informally discussing the need for literacy in women's lives, they would say - "Why should we study? We don't want a job after all" or "what will we get out of studying. We would rather plough our fields, at least we'll get grain to eat." Women invariably would rather talk about their "survival" problems-drinking water, ration, minimum wages, tendu leaves, violence or even widow pensions. During the discussions and village meetings illiteracy was never described as a limitation or a cause for shame. Instead conscious steps were taken to erase internalized stereo-typical images of illiterates as ignorant, powerless, lazy hence poor. The simplistic correlation that illiteracy is the cause of the poverty was questioned.

Discussions led to a demand for information at different levels. How do government schemes or the bureaucracy function? Which government department is responsible for handpump repair? What are the minimum wages in the area? Demonstrations, petitions, public, meetings, visits to the various administrative offices, forest department and police became frequent. Sakhis and Sangha Women now confident and informed were capable of taking action. But inevitably when a certain action entailed writing an application, signing a petition or reading a notice they were at a loss again. They had to depend on sahayoginis or the DIU.

However it took some concrete incidents to make irreversible changes in some of the women's attitude to literacy from a complete negation of the value of literacy to actively seeking and demanding educational inputs. An interesting incident which reflects how this shift came about is worth relating. Ram bai, a Sakhi from Dandi village, took an application for the installation of a new handpump in her village to the block level office. The clerk at the office wrote out a

receipt acknowledging the application. Not being able to read Ram bai mistook this for the administration's acceptance of the demand. She conveyed this to the women at the village meeting. The news of the sanction spread. Ram bai was lauded for her efforts. Finally when the mistake was pointed out it meant a loss of face for her. Ram bai was now convinced that it was not enough to be informed about government schemes and procedures.

If Sakhis were to play an active interventionist role, then they must overcome this hurdle as well. Interactions with structures of power and governance required access to a crucial determinant of power the ability to read and write. This marked a major shift in Mahila Samakhya's educational programme. Some concrete steps were initiated. To create a suitable environment motivational songs and role plays were created by the Sakhis and sahayoginis. These were taken from village to village. Some of Sakhis experiences were reflected in these efforts. The response was not discouraging. International Women's Day celebrations in 1991 became an important forum where both these concerns were put forward by the women.

The demand for specific literacy inputs could not be ignored by the DIU. In response the Banda team began some literacy centers in villages and literacy camps were held for Sakhis.

The Experience of the Literacy Camps for Sakhis

Mahila Samakhya Banda adopted a camp strategy to make the Sakhis literate. This innovative strategy had been successfully tried by Nirantar members working in Rajasthan as part of the innovative Women's Development Programme there. Daily pressures of housework, child care and other survival tasks are common obstacles to women reaching out to literacy programmes. The camp method has evolved as an effective strategy for women's literacy as it takes into account women's chronic problem of low and irregular attendance at formal education Centers.

Moreover the literacy camps provide a supportive non-threatening atmosphere which is crucial in building the self confidence of women as learners. They are based on collective learning processes where an intense and continuous environment for learning is generated through the use of literacy games, songs, and other creative exercises. A high teacher-learner ratio ensures individual attention and a quick learning pace.

The main tenets of the camp approach and the teaching methodology (word centered approach) was shared with the Mahila Samakhya group at a state level Mahila Samakhya workshop in March 1991. Convinced that was a strategy worth experimenting with, the Banda group went ahead and planned a series of three 10 day residential camps spread over three months i.e. each camp is followed by a month long break. Care is taken to ensure that the camps are organized during the lean agricultural periods so that women can be away from home for such long stretches.

Follow-up

At the end of the three camps the learner acquires basic reading and writing skills. However the literacy levels were extremely fragile and required intensive inputs. This was a particularly challenging situation as many Sakhis were from remote village where there were no literate women. Further the word methodology was something that the village community was completely unfamiliar with. Once the women returned home they would often be the buff of jokes and ridicule in their community for not having learnt the alphabets which is traditionally. However some Sakhis were able to get help from within their families. Follow up efforts were restricted to making informal linkages with the Mahila Samakhya network. Sakhis were encouraged to go the centers in their village or the one closest to their homes. sahayoginis would take extra time out during their weekly meeting to monitor and help Sakhis with their literacy. Practice exercises were given to them which the sahayoginis would check on. Despite the fact that follow-up was

not very high. This was true of the intervening months between camps but once the three phases were over relapse became a serious concern.

Material Creation during the Camps

The camps requires trainers not only to teach but also simultaneously develop reading material for women. Creating wall papers, poems and stories are woven into the day's activities. These are then used as teaching - learning material. From the outset the state produced primers were found to be inappropriate and a new primer was developed during the first camp. Certain key words - namak (salt), anaj (grain), majdoori (wages) etc. were chosen in consultation with the core Sahayogini group. Practice exercises and lessons were woven around the key words. These also proved to be points around which discussions could be generated. This primer was then used in the subsequent camps and the literacy centers.

Dissemination of Teaching Methodology

Neany 80 Sakhis in Banda have completed the phases of literacy camps. The learners have included some handpump mechanics as well. What has been remarkable has been the gradual expansion of the trainer group. After the initial external support the responsibility of conducting these camps has been with the sahayoginis and Anudeshikas (teachers). However from the beginning a concerted effort was made to draw in the neo-literate Sakhis of the earlier batches as trainers in subsequent camps. This not only served as a reinforcement of their own fragile literacy skills but also extended the pool of literacy trainers. This was necessary as the camp approach is an intensive process with a high teacher-learner ratio. Monotony, stagnation and high burn out levels of Anudeshikas repeatedly conducting camps necessitated an expansion of the human resource pool. Moreover for neo-literate Sakhis this was an on-the-job initiation to teaching methodology. The growth in the confidence of newly literate Sakhis and their competence at teaching paved the way for a later decision to provide them the opportunity to move onto becoming Anudeshikas themselves.

The Literacy Centers

Almost simultaneously Mahila Samakhya started literacy centers for women. Beginning with a mere four centers the number grew very slowly to seven in the first year. During the initial phase the team was ill-equipped in terms of teaching methodology, teaching-learning material etc. Moreover they had to contend with an additional problem. Being an area with abysmally low literacy levels for women it was nearly impossible finding women instructors for the centers. This problem is particularly relevant in Manikpur where it continues to be a problem. However over the years the demand for literacy centers have grown, particularly in Tindwari block where basic education levels are also higher. Currently there are 40 literacy centers spread over the two blocks.

3. SUSTAINING THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME: MAKING LINKAGES WITH THE HANDPUMP PROJECT

Once the literacy camps and centers got underway the question of sustaining the efforts became of critical importance. The education programme at that juncture received a fillip by making linkages with the recently initiated community handpump maintenance programme. Within this programme women were trained as handpump mechanics, caretakers. Village level water committees were also formed. This initiative led to women learning new skills, increased their self-confidence, and created new roles and identities. It gave the programme and its functionaries a renewed sense of buoyancy and visibility.

What was significant was that throughout the project period steps were taken to build on the educational processes at work within the parameters of a technology transfer programme. Making this link between skill

development and education was crucial to the programme. It created new and varied opportunities for the neo-literate women to use their nascent literacy skills. For instance, Sakhis' involvement in water committee training required them to make charts and other educational material. There were new demands for literacy inputs by the handpump mechanics. They had very functional literacy needs-keeping records of their spare parts, inspection visits, depth of handpump bores etc.

Making these linkages triggered off new innovative processes. As the water programme evolved the need to communicate and share information across the Mahila Samakhya villages as well as the world beyond Mahila Samakhya grew. In terms of the handpump project the dearth of training and print material, easily accessible to neo-literates was sorely felt.

At this stage Mahila Samakhya sought the support of some current members of Nirantar who were at that point located at the National Institute of Adult Education (NIAE) in New Delhi. The emerging concerns from the literacy effort resonated with the ongoing debate around issues of post-literacy in the wake of the nation-wide launch of the total campaigns. The questions that were central to this debate and Nirantar's interests were:

a) The nature of post-literacy (PL) material;

b) Whether it is possible to produce PL material in a decentralized participatory manner.

The mutuality of these concerns brought Mahila Samakhya and the Nirantar group at NIAE together in exploring the possibility of developing gender sensitive material by involving neo-literate women in defining the content, the actual writing and production of the material. The effort was aimed at integrating the work being done in the area of water and sustaining literacy skills, while simultaneously equipping women with the necessary skills so that material production in general could become a decentralized activity.

The Process of Skill Transfer

A series of three residential workshops (three days each), with a core group of women, were planned over a six month period. The core group was a mixed one in terms of levels of literacy competence and included neo-literate Sakhis and handpump mechanics as well as literate sahayoginis. Facilitators from Nirantar were involved in designing, planning and implementing the three workshops and were part of the creation process of the broadsheet - "Mahila Dakiya" (postwoman).

Broadly the process followed in the workshop was to discuss with the group the important events in their work which they wished to communicate to others. Based on the emerging themes or issues smaller groups would then write and illustrate the items. This was then later shared with the larger group after which it went through many rounds of reworking and editing. Attention was paid to the length and simplicity of the sentences and the items. Emphasis was placed on easy readability. Having done this the group then decided on the lay-out of the items. The artwork was then ready for printing.

The Mahila Dakiya (MD) workshops were not just workshops that enabled the transfer of skills in material production to neo-literate women but was also an important point of confluence for the two main streams within the Mahila Samakhya programme - the water project and the FE programme. Mahila Dakiya was a collective effort where the newly - acquired competence and skills of handpump mechanics and the neo-literate Sakhis blended together to affirm and validate the achievements of both process. Seeing their signatures at the end of the printed Mahila Dakiya gave the neo-literate Sakhis both a sense of achievement and an identity as literate women in the village community. At meetings held to discuss the feedback on the Mahila Dakiya, Sakhis related with pride stories of how people in their villages could not believe

that they had produced the broadsheet all on their own.

For the hand pump mechanics, the Dakiya became a vehicle for giving voice to their new experience - "When we first started out everyone in the village would taunt us about how we Kol women were only capable of doing mindless kitchen chores. But today they call us to their homes, make us sit on the charpai (cot) and even offer us tea". The mechanics also wrote about what they thought of upper caste people who saw them as ritually impure but could not keep the area around their own handpump clean. The case of Bhaori village was visually depicted in one Mahila Dakiya and became an issue for discussion in many villages.

By projecting themselves in MD as "bicycle riding women doing a technical job" the mechanics were able to break stereotypical images of women as docile brides or wives in purdah. In Tindwari block for instance where there were no women mechanics. When the Anudeshikas read the Mahila Dakiya at the centers these become images of alternative role models.

Mahila Dakiya did not only become an important document recording the achievements of the programme but also a medium for establishing the identity of the programme in the district itself. The Dakiya also established the most concrete link between work and the use of literacy. The three day workshops saw Sakhis reading and writing energetically in whatever spare time they could find. Besides the broadsheet has been read and re-read innumerable times by the Sakhis providing them with good practice material to reinforce their newly acquired literacy skills.

After the Mahila Dakiya experiment Nirantar has been working on a regular basis with the Banda Mahila Samakhya group. They have been involved in planning and providing resource inputs in all the subsequent educational initiatives.

Measures were taken to ensure that the skills imparted are not restricted to the core group. Mechanism to ensure a further dissemination of skills were evolved. Similar process of creating a newsletter has been replicated at the village level. This has not only resulted in drawing a larger group of women into the process, but ripples of interest were created at the village level for partaking in educational activities. There has been a further spread of information as 12 independent broadsheets were developed by women (in rotation) in clusters of 10 villages - each with its own name and distinctive features, dealing with issues specific to that village.

Spin-Offs of the Material Production Initiatives

This experiment in interactive material production worked as a catalyst for creating fresh learning needs. One spin-off was that women wanted to be trained in screen printing. The interest was sparked off after a field visit to a printing press during one of the MD workshops. Subsequently a group of about 15 women have been trained in screen printing. This opened up many new possibilities in decentralized material production. The production unit has since then printed a range of material - booklet on tendu leaves, posters for international Women's Day, the second literacy primer and even greeting cards have been produced in house. With this effort a further expansion of the skill based was made.

Upgrading Skills and Knowledge of Anudeshikas

The other significant effort made to sustain the education programme has been in terms of constantly upgrading skills of Anudeshikas and creating new learning opportunities for them. The decision to provide new roles for the neo-literate Sakhis as Anudeshikas has been an important step for the education programme. In an area where finding literate women is such a serious problem, this step was born both out of necessity as well as a well-thought-out strategy to provide rural women the opportunity to seek alternative avenues for employment. Further, within the programme, this provided the functionaries the possibility of growth linked to their own efforts at enhancing their skills.

However, after a point their limited skills (low literacy level) hindered them in carrying forward the teaching-learning process at the center. Specific inputs were needed to upgrade their literacy and numeracy skills, expand their knowledge and information base, and teaching skills. It was seen that while the need was more acutely felt for the newly literate Anudeshikas the problem extended to the Anudeshika group in general. Levels of formal education across the Anudeshika group is not very high. Further the quality of the formal education they have received does not equip them to provide the creative educational inputs that is envisaged within Mahila Samakhya. Moreover, many of the learners having attended the centers for a while had achieved fairly high literacy levels. There was a need now to provide them educational inputs of a different kind.

Linked to this is a larger question - what kind of education do we envisage for the women within Mahila Samakhya? Would simply decoding the written word enable poor tribal women to experience education as a strengthening input in their struggle for survival? At this juncture it was felt that while the Anudeshikas had been teaching for a while they had not received the intensive training inputs that other Mahila Samakhya functionaries had. A workshop on gender issues was thus organized for the Anudeshikas. In the workshop gender issues were discussed by analyzing primers and other standard literacy material.

Initially it was not very easy for the Anudeshikas to be critical as they saw the written word as sacrosanct. Gradually through a process of questioning and critiquing Anudeshikas were able to see that the primers in fact reinforced many stereotypes. For instance, the literate were always portrayed in language of plentitude. They were the repositories of knowledge and wisdom, money and resources. They worked hard, stayed clean and were calm in temperament. In sharp contrast illiterates were always stupid and lazy and were as a result poor, unhealthy and aggressive by nature. Women were virtually invisible. They had access neither to a world of knowledge nor resources. They were also not seen as potential targets for economic betterment. Information regarding schemes and loans were always directed towards men. The lessons in which women featured most prominently related to population control and health. Immunization of children and celebration of festivals, apart from doing household work appeared to be the full time occupation of most rural women. No doubt this turn around was engineered rather than spontaneous but the facilitators felt that it was necessary to emphasize the fact that writing or material production is not just a technical skills but reflective of certain intrinsic principles and prejudices as well.

Developing a Primer Interactively

This analysis formed the basis for developing a new primer. A small group of Anudeshikas and sahayoginis with Nirantar support started working on a primer which would portray women and their world as they experienced it. A number of conceptual issues had to be tackled before actual writing work could begin. Language was one such issue. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the complexities in detail it is worth a brief mention, as language and the politics surrounding it is central to any educational endeavour. For instance, a question that had to be addressed was - should the language used be the local language (Bundel) or standardized Hindi? It was observed that while the use of the local language was emphasized during oral communication, in the written mode standard Hindi was preferred. The language issue in the written mode proved to be a complex one and came up repeatedly during the primer creation workshops. While Bundle was the language the women were most familiar with, had greatest ease in while expressing themselves, they simultaneously felt that it was "dehalti" and "laath maar bhasha" (rustic and inferior) - a poor alternative to Hindi. This was a reflection of the inferiority they experienced with their caste, class and gender identity. The facilitators, wanting to counter this, argued for the used of the local language. But the women were clear that they sought

literacy to be able to negotiate and interact with the mainstream. Hence it was imperative for them to learn Hindi. This and many other complexities were discussed and debated and finally the language that was used in the primers was a mixture of Hindi and Bundle.

During the first workshop different primers were analyzed to understand various technicalities involved in developing primers. For instance, how are key words chosen? What is the procedure for breaking key words into consonants and vowel? In what progression are they introduced? The second workshop focused on putting together the key words and creating various lessons based on the words. An effort was made to introduce an element of light heartedness as most primers tend to be restricted to very heavy "survival" issues. The primer was then field tested by the Anudeshikas. Based on the responses changes were made. Then the illustrations and lay-out was worked upon and finally it was screen printed locally. Learners, specially younger women and adolescent girls have found the primer very appealing. Many of the lessons have been the cause for much mirth at the centers.

Regular Inputs to Anudeshikas - Creating New Learning Fora

Besides specific workshops Anudeshikas are given regular inputs every month to upgrade their skills and knowledge base. The monthly Anudeshika meetings have been extended to include day long teaching sessions for the Anudeshikas. An effort is made to make these sessions interesting to create curiosity and a desire to seek more information. Prior preparation is needed for this where Nirantar and the Mahila Samakhya education team sit together and decide what new themes or topics will be taught. Particular problem areas in language and numeracy are also identified. For instance looking at the globe, understanding how the earth, how day and night and seasons are caused. When introducing such topics facilitators try and link to how women understand such phenomena within their knowledge system. Material is collected and practice exercises prepared. Supplementary reading material is also provided where these sessions themselves become a training in teaching methodology. While learning, the Anudeshikas are simultaneously exposed to a variety of new creative exercises, teaching techniques and classroom transactions.

4. NEED FOR A SUSTAINED EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The growth of the education programme described above has led to the emergence of many new learning needs. As the innovations have struck root in Banda the women have had to cope with new situations and questions that came up in the course of their work. Many of these demands cannot be met by the present levels of skills available or the structures that are in place. These led to the need for new information, new skills and new structures within the programme. There is a need for specialized inputs for instance in curriculum development, developing teaching - learning materials etc. The areas (which have been touched upon in the earlier as well) where these needs have been felt most critically area:

- **Upgrading skills of neo-literate Anudeshikas** - Sporadic workshops and teaching sessions have been found inadequate in meeting all the needs.

- **Furthering the education process of the younger women and girls who have been attending centers regularly for a while and have attained certain basic literacy levels.** The demand for further education among this group has been so strongly articulated that in the previous year as many as 25 young women and girls demanded special inputs to prepare them to take the Class 5 equivalency exams (this demand was articulated by the newly literate Anudeshikas as well). Unprepared, Mahila Samakhya had to hurriedly organize special coaching camps for these women. These women need and are seeking more sustained educational inputs.

- **Demands of the Handpump mechanics** Though the mechanics had earlier demanded literacy and some had attended the camps their progress in terms of literacy achievement was low. Unable to initially understand why one later realized that the mechanics at that point were so preoccupied in learning another skill - repair of handpump - that they were not able to concentrate or sustain their interest in literacy. Given their heavy time burden in handpump repair they were finding it difficult to allot time for literacy as well. Moreover their identity as handpump mechanics was so strong that it was a priority for them to sustain learning in this area. Thus attending mechanics' meetings and participating in water committee training etc took precedence over all else.

  Now having consolidated their experience in handpump repair a number of mechanics are once again seeking literacy inputs. Besides they, as well as the group in general have a number of other learning needs. For instance, the mechanics dealing with acute water shortage while repairing handpumps during the summer months, wanted to understand why depth of underground water varies in different area or during different seasons in the year, whether this was a new phenomenon or not. These questions led to a discussion on the falling water table and the broader issue of management of water resources. This had initiated a keen interest in the larger environmental problems in the Banda region. The other broad area of interest had been the interlinkages between water and health. Handpump mechanics increasingly came to realize the correlation between quality of drinking water and health.

Planning a Residential Educational Center for Women

Given the nature of the needs articulated, the Mahila Samakhya - Nirantar group feels it is time to plan a more sustained and long term educational strategy. The Mahila Shishan Kendra or residential educational center for women has been conceived of as an educational resource center where these different needs will be catered to. Being a completely new area of work - different to running center or periodic camps - there is a need to develop a common conceptual understanding on a number of issues - curriculum content, the curriculum development methodology, equivalency levels with the formal system (whether one wants it at all or not), reading and writing what other skills and competencies, the teaching methodology etc. At a more functional level issues that one had to deal with are - Who among the different groups are we going to cater to? How is it going to be sustained? How long should the course be? What support material will have to be prepared? Who will teach? How are we dealing with teachers training? What the content of the training will be?

A core group which includes people the DIU, Anudeshikas and Nirantar have been deliberating on these issues. A number of meeting have been held. Other resource persons with experience in curriculum development, planning educational inputs have also been involved. After considerable discussion certain commonalties were arrived at.

- **Who and When:** As a beginning, a six month course has been planned for adolescents and young women, Sakhis and mechanics. These women will already have basic literacy skills. The timings of the course have been planned so as to keep in mind the agricultural lean seasons. Therefore the six month period will be broken up into two sessions. A month long break will be provided for the harvesting season. During that month a refresher course will be held for neoliterate Sakhis.

- **Equivalency:** While the MSK will not be based on equivalents with the formal system it was felt that giving the exam might be an expectation of many of the learners. Given the earlier experience this seems like a realistic eventuality. For others the expectation might be in terms of being

competent enough to perform an economically viable activity or becoming an anudeshika with the program. Flexibility therefore needs to be woven into the programme. Instead of meeting specific expectations the MSK curriculum will focus on developing skills and competencies of the learners rather than rigid equivalency levels or minimum learning levels.

► **Curriculum:** But the most challenging area of work that the Mahila Samakhya-Nirantar group has begun working on has been with regard to developing a curriculum. This will be the core around which all aspects of the programme will be woven. The group was quite clear that it wanted to approach curriculum development in a holistic manner rather that the traditional subject wise approach. This is based on the understanding that learning is not linear nor compartmentalized. Central to the curriculum will be certain themes or issues. These issues based modules will comprise different elements determined by the needs aspirations and relevance to learners.

While an effort will be made to relate knowledge and information to learners lived experiences this will not be in exclusion to expanding the information base. Providing information for information's sake will be avoided. What is of importance is the manner in which new information and concepts are introduced. Therefore making linkages with familiar things within their environment will become important. For instance, learning about the structure of governance at the central and state level would seem irrelevant unless it is linked to Panchayati Raj - a system they are familiar with. Thus the curriculum content then assumes great importance. After considerable brainstorming the four major theme areas that have been identified are water, land, tree and forests, and village and society. Different aspects will be interwoven within these broad areas. Gender will be a running theme throughout the curriculum.

As there are certain cognitive sequences in learning, while planning the curriculum content and the different lessons, careful attention will be paid to grading - both in terms of information as well as other competencies.

The curriculum is being developed interactively. An effort is being made to build on the skills acquired earlier while working on Mahila Dakiya and the primer. Work has been initiated at different levels. A small core group of resource persons and Anudeshikas are working on developing the methodology, grading, competency levels etc. Gradually the group will be enlarged. At another level effort will be made to generate material with the Anudeshikas and women at the center. There is a constant flow between the field and the core group. Particularly in terms of modification of exercises, cross checking information, discerning comprehension. The curriculum is attempting to steer clear of the lesson and lecture mode of teaching. Instead a variety of teaching modes will be used - structured lessons, creative exercises, experiments, role plays, field trip, etc. The curriculum will also be open ended as far as possible so that teachers will be free to innovate as they go along.

The curriculum being creative and experimental will depend very heavily on how teachers are able to handle classroom situations. The creativity and ability of the teachers will determine to a large extent the success of the curriculum. Thus training of the teachers assumes a great deal of importance. Selection of teachers requires serious thought.

Yet to begin the curriculum development process undertaken so far has already led to certain skill development particularly in terms of a conceptual clarity and other methodological issues related to creation of lessons, curriculum planning, evolving competency levels, etc.

CONCLUSION

This case study validates the fact that education and empowerment are twin processes for women. For poor rural women whose lives are determined by the realities of their socio-economic context as well as their gender, education acquires a special meaning.

It is not simply a transfer of skills but more a question of how these skills help them meet survival needs and negotiates their immediate environment. Innovations in education for women therefore need not merely to be effective, and efficient but must answer the question of how women are going to bring into practice their learning.

1. Need for Responsive and Flexible Structures and Roles

The case study reveals that different educational strategies have been employed at various junctures in the programme. This has been complemented by a movement in roles for functionaries. For any programme to be effective there is a need for structures and roles to be flexible and responsive. For instance Manikpur has a problem in terms of finding literate women to teach at the centers. In response, despite their low literacy levels newly literate Sakhis were allowed to put their skills into practice. As capabilities get enhanced and new roles develop there is a need for new and flexible structures to support these new abilities. This is synergistic process as new roles and new structures mean the further creation of new skills and abilities. Thus allowing neo literates Sakhis to move into new roles has meant that new inputs must be provided to further enhance their skills. As this could not be met within the present framework there is a need to expand the educational infrastructure. This led to the decision to pursue the Mahika Shikshan Kendra.

2. The Need for Decentralization and Skill Dissemination

To ensure the growth and dynamism of a programme there is a need to decentralize. This leads to a further dissemination of skills and an expansion of the human resource pool. For instance, training neo-literate Sakhis to be trainers at the literacy camps both meant that they have been able to move into new areas of work - some of the Anudeshikas are now moving into the curriculum development process - while simultaneously freeing other functionaries. Similarly transferring skills is an important component that facilitates and strengthens the decentralization process. For instance transferring skills in material production during Mahika Dakiya allowed local initiatives to take root. This was furthered during the primer workshop process. These skills are being built on further during the curriculum development.

3. Enhancing the Conceptual Understanding of the Group

It is not uncommon in educational and development efforts to leave the conceptual (read intellectual) expertise either to select few within the group or to outsiders. In the Banda experience a definite attempt has been made to break these divisions. There at various stages concrete inputs have been provided to enhance the conceptual understanding of the group. For instance, it is not enough to say that locally developed material is preferred. This must be based on a critical understanding of why and in what circumstances. Therefore it was necessary to analyze traditional primers before the group themselves articulated the need to develop their own primer. Group discussions on the issue of language is important if they are to understand the larger issues of politics of language and power dynamics, for instance. Similarly building an understanding on the concepts of curriculum development, is important for the group to grow and lessen their dependence on outside "experts".

1. *The programme has been extended to two other states - Andhra Pradesh and Bihar.*

2. *The organizational structure of the programme in Uttar Pradesh is as follows: at the apex level, the programme is coordinated by a registered society. The State Education Secretary is its ex-officio chairperson. The society comprises a general council and an executive committee, which is responsible for providing overall direction to the programme. At the district level, the structure consists of a District Implementation Unit (DIU) with a district coordinator as its head. The DIU plans, implements and coordinates the district level programme. Within the DIU sahayoginis are full-time programme functionaries that oversee the work of ten village level animators or Sakhis. The Sakhis are responsible for mobilizing and coordinating the Mahila Sanghas or Village women's groups.*

3. *The land ownership pattern in Banda District is more skewed than other parts of the country with the upper 5% of the landed peasantry owing more than 22% of the total cultivable land.*

THE LITERACY PROGRAM OF FRIENDS IN VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT BANGLADESH (FIVDB)

Hasnat Khandakar

Friends In Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) is a national non-government development organization established in 1979. Since 1981, FIVDB has been implementing an integrated rural development program in the areas of greater Sylhet, a division that is located in the north-eastern part of the country. The program aims at poverty alleviation through the social and economic empowerment of the rural poor. The activities include formation of rural organizations, non-formal education and functional literacy, child education, training on human and vocational skills, savings, credit and micro enterprise development, promotion of regenerative agriculture through organic horticulture, livestock development and a preventive health care programme.

FEATURES OF THE FIVDB FUNCTIONAL LITERACY METHOD

The method combines discussion of rural issues and literacy instructions in each lesson.

- The discussion are based on the life, work and problems of the rural landless poor.
- The discussions involve the participants in finding answers by themselves to their particular problems. Some of these sessions also include information on agriculture, health, nutrition, the formation of people's self-help organization, women's rights, socio-legal issues related to organization, family laws, inheritance, marriage, dowry, divorce, gender equality etc.
- New letters are taught within the context of words and sentences are introduced gradually throughout the series.
- Controlled vocabulary is followed in the sessions. Only a few new words are taught in each lesson and they are repeated as many times as possible in several lessons in order to build up a sight vocabulary.
- The 60 lessons are divided into three books and are to be completed in 120 session of 2 hours each.
- Learners books are supplemented with charts and flash cards to aid the discussions and retention of literacy skills.
- Guidelines are provided for each day's discussion and literacy instruction.

The basic literacy course is completed in 120 sessions of two hours each spread over about 6 months. Therefore over the six months, the learners on aggregate can have a learning session of 240 hours. In addition, FIVDB has developed a post-literacy follow-up course of three months to further strengthen the literacy, accounting and analytical skills of the participants which follows the basic course.

In order to implement this program, functional literacy materials were developed in 1981 following an extensive field research. Presently FIVDB provides support to 200 development organizations with training and learning materials. It produces and supplies basic learning materials for 300,000 adult learners every year. In 1981 FIVDB assisted development organizations in Bihar, India to adapt its functional literacy materials in Hindi.

FIVDB has also developed a number of reading materials for the neo-literates. A monthly tabloid news paper "Gram Bandhab" (Village Friend) and a bi-monthly journal "Bikash" (Progress) are regularly published to cater the needs of new readers.

FIVDB is continuously involved in the development and publication of reading materials including short stories, case studies, folklore, plays, adoption of classics and information materials in agriculture, health, income generation, women's rights, social-legal rights etc. for new readers. It has also published a poster featuring "Amar Katha Balte Chai, Lekhapara Shikhte Chai" for the neo-readers

After the completion of the follow-up course, a 'study circle' is formed and a collection of books for neo-readers in the villages are made available through the Village Library Program. Both male and female groups have been carrying out this program since its inception.

On the basis of the frequent visits to these learning sessions, it can be said that the female learners were seen to be relatively more enthusiastic about pursuing such classes. Most of the female learners have been seen taking the classes while holding their six months or one year old children in the arms, while leaving their very important family tasks undone for the time being. These field experiences also show that they are very much interested in participating in different curricular activities particularly designing and outlining. Almost all the female study sessions were seen as something that appeared to be very interesting from their part. It is really amazing to see a group of the society's most underprivileged and deprived section taking the education so seriously. All these instances simply imply the emergence of one truth, that is, these underprivileged women desperately want to learn; want to learn about something they never knew, want to learn about something they never even thought, want to learn about something that they were never told and more importantly want to know about their oppressed lives.

TRAINING ON THE FIVDB FUNCTIONAL LITERACY METHOD

FIVDB offers two types of training. Training of Trainers (TOT) is designed for literacy trainers and supervisors from different organizations involved in functional literacy programme. The two week long "TOT" is mostly held at its Central Training Center in Khadimnagar, Sylhet. The TOT is organized in Dhaka too. FIVDB offers training for literacy facilitators (Shebok/Shebika) at its Training Center or at the project sites of different parts of the country, depending on the request of user organizations. In these training courses, it has always been observed that the women are participating equally with the men in terms of number and skills.

At FIVDB, each year a few of the functional education graduates become facilitators. For this they certainly need well developed literacy and numeracy skills. Volunteer health workers are also chosen from among the female graduates. They are required to read various booklets and articles on health as well as to keep records of their activities. FIVDB also offers special residential training courses for women on women's specialized social and organizational skills as well as on occupational and vocational skills for economic development. It also supports organized women groups in the village with micro credit and expertise in the small scale enterprises. Organized women groups are also trained to carry out the regenerative and organic agricultural plantation system.

Involvement of different actors has allowed the development of a range of literacy programs in Nepal. The existence of various models is considered an advantage specially in a country like Nepal where languages and culture are different from region to region.

Model 1 involves a twelve month literacy course followed by three month vocational course and community reading center. For the first 6 months the national literacy primers "Naya Goreto" (New Trial) are commonly used and for the next 6 months literacy materials designed by SCUS (Save the Children US) and other organizations, for advance learners are used. At this point implementors have options to select materials they want to use on the basis of priority areas of their program.

The next 3 months in this model has been designed to transfer few practical functional skills to graduates of literacy class. These lessons are concerned with upgrading their existing farming skills as well as business literacy. The Community reading center comes at the end as the Center keeps different types of books used by the graduates. It helps to retain their literacy skills as well as update them on innovations and other development messages.

Model 2 consists of an 18-month literacy course divided into 3 phases. The first part is a nine-month basic course followed by a six-month course and concluded with 3 month additional course.

In the first nine months, emphasis is given to basic literacy while the remaining period focuses on functional skills related with health, family planning, kitchen gardening, child rearing, income generating activities etc. This model especially targets females. The Basic Primary Education Project (BPEP) has developed literacy materials for all the phases.

Model 3 comprises six months and is widely used throughout the country. The national literacy primers "Naya Goreto", are also used in the courses.

The Adult Education Section of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Social Welfare (MOECSW) is using this model as well as a number of NGOs who are being supported to replicate the model by few donor agencies. While the primers have integrated development messages, the 6 month course focuses on the acquisition of basic literacy skills. The key word approach, use of participatory approaches of learning and illustrations of the primers used in the classes have been found to be appealing to learners.

Model 4 involves literacy being linked with women's saving and credit groups where the graduates of literacy class are organized in women's saving and credit groups and initiate different types of income generating activities. The duration of the literacy class is between 9 to 12 months. After completing 6 months basic course of "Naya Goreto", either they go for 6 month advance course or 3 month follow-up course. Literacy materials developed by SCUS, Action Aid, World Education, BPEP and the Adult Education Section of (MOECSW) are available for use in the follow-up or advance literacy courses.

In this model, NGOs primarily manage the program and generate cash contributions from learners in different forms like purchasing of books, registration and tuition fees.

This amount is kept as learners' group fund and later used as capital fund for the credit program among their group members. To increase this limited fund, they have either been linked with financial institutions or given seed money.

Two major issues that have emerged regarding the models are:

- Organizing 6 months literacy course is not enough and even difficult to make women and men literate. Thus, each literacy class needs to be followed up either by 6 month or 3 month additional course.

- The second issue is the need to link the literacy program with income generating activities during or after the advance course.

In the discussion, it was clear that majority of the participants favored model 4 as the appropriate model for Nepal. Reviewing the strategical needs as well as examining how these literacy models can be made more effective, the participants came up with the following points:

1. **Contribution from learners.** As many Non Governmental sectors are raising contributions from learners and have proved effective, the group felt it necessary to replicate the idea. While principally agreeing on this, few participants noted that even at the present situation, where 100% subsidy from Government and few donors have not been able to make effective program, how could one expect that learners would be interested to join if they have to pay? As the government does not have this policy, it might be problematic to introduce this in government-operated literacy programs. However, the group considered that participants could be asked to make cash contribution on registration, tuition, deposit, books, absent fine and others.

2. **Partnership approach** - As international NGOS (INGOs) are equally involved in literacy and other community development activities in Nepal, participants shared their problems as a result of direct program implementation of INGOs. As NGOs are operating comparatively with limited resources, sometimes INGOs' program operating policy and strategies create confusion and competition. One example is the payment of salaries for the facilitator of literacy class where one INGO started to pay almost double salary from the normal. On the other hand, if INGOs work together with NGOs, this increases the chances of program sustainability.

3. **Formation of literacy committee at different levels** - The group realized that it is important to have a literacy committee at different levels (central, district, village development committee and ward level) which would be responsible for coordination. Also, it has been recommended to form literacy class management committee in each class.

4. **Community based participatory approach** - Although participants suggested that programs should be community based, it was not possible to define community based and what makes participatory approach in such a short time. Fund raising, community contribution, partnership with local NGOs and a few other processes mentioned in the next point were considered close to community based and participatory approach.

5. **Designing course according to community problems** - Some process activities were also presented as necessary to replicate the program effectively. This include the conducting of a baseline survey, introduction of a village readiness program, group formations before literacy class, selection of facilitator by participants, introduction of social awareness class, functional activities, different kind of training and local and central level supervision.

LINKING TOTAL LITERACY TO UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Anita Rampal

I am working with the All India People's Science Network (AIPSN), and especially with an educational NGO called Ekalavya. In the recent past, a separate offshoot of the AIPSN, called The Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS) or the Indian People's Science Education Forum was formed with a focus on literacy; consequently, we have also been active through that organization. In this presentation, I will combine the experiences of Ekalavya as well as BGVS, because they are both working together. Using Ekalavya's experience in education, especially in science education, we are trying to explore how the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) and other programmes can link up with elementary education.

INNOVATING ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: THE MADHYA PRADESH EXPERIENCE

In Madhya Pradesh, we have total freedom to do that we want within the broad framework of the syllabus - something which I don't think any other state has ever allowed. We can work within the government system, with government teachers, government schools, and totally overhaul the curriculum as well as teacher training patterns and more importantly, the examination pattern. Even the board exam for class VIII was designed as an open book exam where children could bring their books and answer questions. When children can consult a book to answer a question, the question has to be a creative one. This also made the teachers get into a different mode of thinking - because children were not expected to learn by rote, and the exam is not primarily information-based.

The emphasis was in making learners do various kinds of activities, so that they are fully involved, and not passively sitting and listening to lectures. This involved intensive work, first, in the science programme, and then a programme for social sciences, for middle schools. There is also a package for primary schools - Class I to Class V, in which one departed from the rigid framework of the minimum levels of learning. Rather we try to see who are the children who are coming to us, and what is their pace of learning, what is the method one can use so that they enjoy what they are learning and they start thinking about these concepts and ideas. It is not just basic skills, but also a lot of thinking that goes along with what they are doing. This is a very rich experience and many people from various kinds of institutions and organizations got involved because of the freedom available to do things differently.

LINKING TLC WITH ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

BGVS was formed to work totally as a literacy mobilization organization, as a support to the National Literacy Mission where it works in districts, setting up separate units in every district and even at the block level. Aside from its mobilization contribution, it is also involved in training. BGVS has been working in many TLCs and in some places it has been effective and successful in trying to ensure that the campaign actually is a people's programme.

In other areas, there have been problems caused by bureaucratic hurdles -- the Collector and the Saksharata Samitis (District Literary Committees) have not really understood how to work in conjunction with NGOs. But in the last few years it has been found that wherever the TLCs were effective, even though there were different spin-offs, diverse programmes evolved as people got mobilized in that area. One remarkable thing was the universal demand for education. We have been discussing how, when women

started coming into the Mahila Samakhya programme, there has been a demand for more concrete educational inputs. Similarly here, people who were coming into these centers felt that if I can come, then why can't my child get more meaningful kind of education. For many years we had felt that there is no demand. Now through the efforts of the BGVS there was a concrete demand coming from various sections.

THE JOY OF LEARNING CAMPAIGN

How do we respond to this? Since there is already enough momentum built, and enough mobilization in districts, as well as a whole network of activists and volunteers working in literacy now, BGVS has decided to work very strongly in the area of elementary education. Their main aim is to link up literacy work with the universalization of elementary education. Towards this, the first step taken this year is the Joy of Learning Campaign.

All of us have been discussing our role in getting children prepared and sending them back to schools - but if the school environment remains oppressive, our efforts are bound to fail. There will be drop-outs, or children may not learn much. By now there have been many studies, government as well as non-government, which show the levels of achievement in schools. Even after class V, children are not able to read, they do not even have the basic skills in numeracy. So the question is, what are we doing? Even if we somehow ensure that children go to schools, what happens in those schools? We really must effect a change there. And secondly, even though people wanted education, there was still this deeply held belief their children could not cope with the culture of a school.

To break that kind of an image, the idea is to make a school like a Mela (fair). BGVS has begun this process in many different states - organizing very varied and structured activities, which are learning activities, for example, origami and painting, along with a math corner, a low cost science experiments corner, a history-walk corner, and science through the kitchen. One has to redefine learning - that history is not just learning and memorizing a lot of names, but something much more interesting. Trained resource persons come and conduct a corner for a couple of hours. About 20 children come to a corner, they will perform those activities, and make it visible to the community. The whole village, parents, teachers, everyone, can see that the child is learning and is enjoying it. So the idea is to make that visibility possible.

We all know that child centered education should be like this, that children should be allowed to ask questions, there should be a democratic atmosphere, but we do not have these models visible to people on a large scale. We might have it in a progressive school or in a few public schools here and there. So the campaign has now been taken up in about 250 districts, making inroads into the block and the Panchayat level committees, to make a dent in their attitudes and promote an alternative form of education. The campaign will continue until next year, in several states, with different schedules. The importance of the campaign lies in the fact that today, when you talk to people about better education, their demand is for things like heavy books, lots of written work, and children learning multiplication tables! This is simply because they think that is what education is. So if you really want people to become critical about the traditional form of schooling, one has to make an alternative visible to them.

THE EXCHANGE VISIT PROGRAMME

A strategy that People's Science Groups have been adopting, and which we have also used successfully, is exchange visits between children of different communities, regions and classes, using the guest-host method of accommodation. Children from different places come and stay in each other's houses. We organized one such exchange at the national level in Delhi, where we had 500 children from different states in India who stayed with 500 Delhi-based children. And even though it is very difficult to organize

and arrange such a thing, for many children who had come from villages and interior areas, it was the first time they were staying in someone else's house. This itself breaks many barriers. For example, when a child who knows only Telugu is staying with a child who knows only Hindi, the struggle of living together and communicating with each other for those 5-6 days is an enriching experience. In fact, teachers have requested a similar exchange programme for themselves. Based on this, wherever we have Bal Melas (children's fair) whether at the District or State Level, we ensure that it is in this kind of a guest - host system, where parents also get involved. Parents get curious about what is happening with the children, and they too learn much about other cultures and religions. This learning experience is much more fruitful than reading about it in a book as a chapter or having lessons on national integration. This method also forces the community to get involved and share the costs.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

- **Fostering all-around innovation** - A start has been made with the freedom given to BGVS to launch innovative education inputs in schools in 4 states. Through this process, at least some schools will be reoriented to function more creatively, trying out different packages; the curriculum will be transformed because learning activities will be based on actual experience. Rajasthan had a programme called Shiksha Karmi Project, (Education Worker Project) in which a local youth (a girl who has studied till 4th or 5th, or a boy has studied till class·7 or 8) are trained to run schools in villages lacking a trained teacher, or where regular trained teachers are unlikely to remain, even if posted there. Local youths feel more concerned and their accountability to the community is greater since they too are members of the village. A similar experiment is being tried in Madhya Pradesh, with some modifications. This kind of freedom of innovation should be created in other states too. If such experimentation with different models can come up in different pockets, it could lead to close involvement between the person who is teaching and the community.

- **Motivating teachers** - How do we create an educational model which motivates and excites teachers, gets them involved, and removes the drudgery and frustration they face. And even if we could, would we be ultimately able to change the nature of our schools and the classrooms? If the kind of educational movement described above occurs, then I think teachers will inevitably be transformed by it, and they themselves will begin to develop innovative programmes.

- **Changing curriculum** - Until now the most constraining factor has been the state's rigid control over curriculum. Even if anyone wanted to make a change, it would be subverted by the tight control over curriculum, examination pattern, and teacher training. If the stranglehold of curriculum can be loosened, through experiments like the Bihar Education Project in different states, or through the programme of linking TLC with elementary education, and if the space and freedom which has been offered right now in some states is retained and spread, a great deal can be achieved.

- **Creating better teaching/learning materials** - In the TLCs there is one important area of flexibility - that every district can make its own primer. This has been the first time in our history when this decentralized approach has been taken to make teaching materials. Until now it was totally state controlled. So if this kind of freedom is given even in school curricula so that the concerns, culture, and specificity of the area is reflected, this will also create a positive change in the motivation for coming to school.

Box 2.1 - TWO VIEWS ON LITERACY STRATEGIES IN INDIA

Manisha Priyam

Strategies for imparting literacy in Mahila Samakhya range from the absolutely impromptu, to the camp-based and center-based approach. The selection of teachers was done by the Sanghas but since it was not always possible to find trained women in most cases it worked out that whoever was a literate woman in a village turned out to be the instructor at the village level. Training inputs were given later on.

Evaluation methods were also quite varied. Wherever there was a link with TLC, they adopted TLC evaluation methods. In some areas, certain other adhoc methods have been developed and successfully used. In Bidar a method of assessment which I would call the post card method involves giving every learner 30 postcards for them to keep writing letters to the Mahila Samakhya office with those postcards. These postcards turned out to be a huge volume of written data on every learner. The letters were examined and used as a basis for the continuous assessment of every learner. And the areas that needed to be emphasized on every learner, for example, someone's spelling was weak, and so on, would be followed up.

As women gained knowledge in letters, they often found the material that was given to them - either from the TLC or through Mahila Samakhya/NGOs - very uninteresting. Sometimes, women have even complained that the materials given to them are "gender-bombarded", and not appealing enough to sustain their interest. There was great demand for material that was interesting in itself, and which could sustain their enthusiasm for learning.

It was also realized that there is a greater demand for systematic resource inputs that are educational in nature. These are demands for systematic teacher training as opposed to gender training where literacy teachers would like to go through a training which equips them to manage the classroom situation. There are also requests for inputs on innovative learning. Finally institutionalization is also one direction for literacy workers as seen in the case of Mahila Samakhya workers who are demanding that educational institutions for women with an integrated empowerment framework be set up.

Suddha Sundaraman

The total literacy campaigns (TLC) represent a significantly new approach to the mobilization and empowerment of women. Its essence is a joint, massive campaign by all governmental and non-governmental forces acting unitedly, in a spirit of voluntarism.

Unfortunately in many districts of the country today, the programme has become bureaucratized with the voluntary sector having little or no role. One obvious consequence of this is that the aspect of women's empowerment is never followed up. Conscious of this danger, Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi initiated a women's movement called Samata (Equality). Samata was to ensure that the literacy campaign remains linked to women's issues and that the mobilization of women that occurs in the literacy phase is developed into a full-fledged movement for women's empowerment in the post-literacy and continuing education phase.

While there have been different strategies to integrate the concerns of the women's movement with literacy efforts, we are also conscious of how limited such attempts have been. The limitations flow from three major obstacles.

One barrier is that such strategies require a very sensitive, trained, committed district and block level leadership. Whereas literacy work can be carried out relatively easier by a large number of persons, the higher levels of awareness and commitment needed for gender equity campaigns cannot be produced overnight.

Though there is no absolute scarcity of funds, in practice at the district level funds are a major constraint. For example in all the six districts where panchayat leadership training camps have been held, women have requested funds for holding 30 to 40 more such camps at the block and gram panchayat level. This has not been made available. Urgent intervention is needed to ensure that the NGOs involved - in this case Samata/BGVS are able to access to district level funds for this work.

Consensus on gender equity in literacy work has not been arrived at. Very often junior district officials or even literacy activists object to or do not prioritize this work. As a result, this has not become a major campaign for women's empowerment as such.

One of the major objectives of the workshop was to share innovations in literacy program within the country. The flexibility on NGOs side has allowed the development and testing of different new initiatives in the field of literacy, more often as a response to the problems in the literacy programs.

• **Networking at the regional level** - The regional level networking among CARE, Save the Children-Japan, DISVI, SCUS and many other local NGOs in the mid and eastern terai area of Nepal have set an example. It has been proved to be extremely helpful in reducing differences in literacy program implementation, making use of technical support available in the region and development of follow up literacy materials. Networking has served to minimize problems of coordination, low quality training and lack of uniformity.

• **Linkage of literacy with saving and credit programs** - Several NGOs and INGOs and WDD from government sector have linked literacy programs with income generating activities. The graduates of a literacy class are organized for saving and credit programs and then these groups either link with banks or funds are provided by the concerned agencies as seed money for credit programs. Amount of savings, size of loan and interest varies among these agencies.

The linkage with income generating program has been considered as extremely helpful as it provides an answer to what the participants would be doing once they graduate from literacy class and which motivates learners to continue the program.

• **Village Readiness Program** - Introduced a couple of years ago, the program insists on the preparation of the community where the literacy class is expected to happen. The program allows the sharing of each aspect of literacy program with the people in the community people so that they will have a clear understanding. Conducting literacy surveys which involve people from the same community and a program orientation are its key features.

• **Different versions of Literacy Packages** - While the basic literacy primer consist of one version, many NGOs have come up with different forms for follow-up literacy materials. For example, a basic primer have been developed in Mager language by Action Aid in Nepal.

Similarly, SCUS has also developed a tarai version of its follow-up literacy materials "Koseli" and widely used in the tarai districts of mid and eastern regions of the country.

• **Learners Generated Materials Development** - The Learners Generated Materials Development (LGM) initiated by SCUS since four years has already become popular through out the country. Today many other agencies like World Eduction, Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), Backward Society Education (BASE), CARE and Lutheran World Service have already replicated the idea.

The LGM advocates learners as writers of reading materials that could be used in literacy classes. Usually LGMs are developed by organizing workshop of literacy participants. The important benefits of the LGM is that it contributes significantly in building confidence among the writers, the materials will represent local issues and thus will be more meaningful and easy to understand and helps in retaining the literacy skill of participants.

• **Language Experience Approach** - The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is an alternative to the "Key Word" method. Participants get the opportunity to create their learning sentences by themselves where they are encouraged to develop a few sentences' stories according to their interest. When they tell the story verbally, the facilitator writes the same story exactly as told. Later the same story is used for introducing letters. In this approach the

facilitator uses the selected few sentences to familiarize learners whereas one word is used in the key word approach. As the LEA accepts the flexibility of decoding stories developed by learners in their own language, the approach could be used with the minority groups.

• **Family Literacy** - A comparatively new concept in Nepal, the program involves the use of literacy skills within the family and community. In the family level, literacy is promoting inter-generation literacy as well as aimed at strengthening literacy skills required to interact with different institutions of the communities e.g. school, health post, post office, bank etc.

Introduction of a "**baby book**" by Save the Children is one of the key activities of the family literacy program in Nepal where it is seen to provide three benefits to its users. *First*, it serves as a resource manual for the mothers of new born babies for child rearing in which they will have to document the first and interesting things in the life of their baby from birth to 2 years of age. *Second*, the book is a good reading material for the new graduates of literacy classes. *Finally*, as the book has provided enough room for documentation about babies, obviously it promotes writing skill of the users. In other words, the book is helpful in retaining and improving reading and writing skills of literacy class graduates.

• **Linking literacy program with parenting and child to child program** - Few participating agencies have been found active in early .childhood development programs. Yet parenting education and child to child programs are two major activities linked with literacy program in Nepal. Parenting education has become much popular as almost half of the total participants are mothers. Usually conducted along with adult literacy program, parent education classes have made use of primers developed specially for this. On the other hand, child to child program has been linked to out of school children between 8 to 14 years old.

• **Re-producing authority** - Centralized publication and distribution system have appeared as one of major problems of getting literacy materials in time. As a response, ***Innovative Forum for Community Development***, with the reproducing authority from few agencies is working as clearing house. The Forum collects requests from the users of the literacy publications for which they have been authorized for reprinting and distribution. The reproducing authority has been recognized as one of the effective ways to reduce dependency at one point.

• **Community literacy** - Community literacy program is the most recent program being initiated by Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and British Council together with Innovative Forum for Community Development. The project has been trying to promote use of real literacy materials as post literacy in Nepalese communities. Real literacy materials are those printed reading materials used in different forms such as product labels, instructions for the users or buyers, posters, job application forms, bank vouchers etc. The other two categories of literacy materials are especially designed and extension materials. The first one is especially designed or created materials for literacy program and extension material represents materials with development messages.

• **Sarlahi Pilot Program** - The National Non Formal Education Council has been conducting a pilot program to test effective methods of literacy teaching and learning in a community where participants do not use Nepali as their first language and their mother tongue is different. For this purpose the council has selected Sarlahi District.

CASE STUDY OF BIHAR MAHILA SAMAKHYA

Sister Sujita

I work with the Bihar Education Project (BEP), which was the first project of its kind in India. Started in 1991, BEP is funded by UNICEF, Government of India, and the state authorities of Bihar.

Presently, the Bihar Education Project has 7 basic components:

1. Primary education;
2. Early childhood education;
3. Teacher training;
4. Women's empowement (defined and implemented as in Mahila Samakhya);
5. Culture;
6. Communication; and
7. Continuing education.

I am responsible for the the Mahila Samakhya part of the BEP and we work in 7 districts at the moment, covering over 1300 villages. Mahila Samakhya alone has a strength of 120 full-time Sahayoginis (activists responsible for approximately 10 villages) and more than 2000 trained Sakhis (village-level women activisits/leaders) and more than 20,000 women in village collectives. This does not include those groups which are weak and not meeting regularly.

Within Mahila Samakhya, the pattern of training and working in the field is very much the same as in any other Mahila Samakhya state programme - viz: awareness-building, taking up issues, fighting for minimum wages, protesting violence against women, training activities, and so on. But we have a very interesting component within Mahila Samakhya-BEP, which we call Jag-Jagi. The origin of this name is very interesting as it comes from the belief that to awaken this world, we must reach that half of humanity (women) who have not been awakened for education. Jag also stands for **jagat** (world) and **jagi** means awakening. Thus, Jag-Jagi is the educational component of Mahila Samakhya in Bihar.

COMPONENTS OF JAG-HAGI

The school preparedness programme, or **school tayyari karyakram.** Every year in November-December-January, we organise events like **Maa-Beti Melas** (Mother-Daughter Fairs) where women come with their daughters up to the age of 15. They come in big groups, and all day there is singing, talking and hearing about education. This activity is undertaken at this time of year for strategic reasons because school enrolment begins in January, at which point we are right into the next component of Jag-Jagi.

Enrollment and retention of girl children in school. Mahila Samakhya Bihar places a lot of emphasis on primary education of girls. The women's groups in the villages are encourgaed to discuss and deal with this as well. In January, all the groups are busy enrolling girl children and by then we have prepared a list of all the girl children in Mahila Samakhya villages. Using the list as a base, women see to it that girl children are enrolled and retained in school. In some villages, Manila Samakhya **sangh/samooh** (village-level women's collectives) keep watch in the villages to get hold of any girls who are doing other domestic work - like grazing goats - during school hours. They are firmly taken back to school and told to do their chores after 4 o'clock.

School supervision and monitoring by Mahila Samakhya. Initially teachers were very hostile to us. They saw themselves as government servants and resented supervision, especially by illiterate women. So we kept changing strategies. Finally, we taught the Sahayoginis some very good action songs. We asked the teachers to at least allow us into the classroom to teach the sutdents a song. Through the songs, we got inside the schools. Now, the teachers look forward to the Sahayoginis'visit to the

schools. We have developed a format by which the Sahayoginis keep records of the attendance of school teachers as well as of the children. This enables us to check the total number of children enrolled (especially girl children), how many are present when we visit; if the teacher was absent, where he/she has gone; and if the teacher was late, how late and why, etc., etc. So far, we carry out 6 checks a month for each school. This is too heavy a load, and we intend to cut down this number. I think the teachers have now accepted us, and some districts have responded well to our intervention - for example, in one block where Mahila Samakhya is operative, 95 percent of teachers are coming to school on time. And, they are afraid of women's groups. Almost 100 percent of our women are illiterate, but they are monitoring the education of their girls very actively. We have been accepted, I think, because we are part of a wider education program like the BEP. If we were only a women's programme, perhaps they would have thrown us out! Being within BEP gives us acceptance and access to many things.

Kishori Jag-Jagi, for girls over 15 of age, and **Mahila Jag Jagi**, for women both of which are picking up momentum now. The demand for these women's literacy centres came from the people themselves. Our strategy has been to ask any Mahila Samooh which wants a literacy center in their village, to find themselves a person who can teach them so we tell them "We don't know where to go and find a teacher for you". So a frantic search goes on. From our side, there are no restrictions - it could be a man or a woman of any caste, age or community - we don't care whom they choose. But they must choose whom they are confident about, and who is able to read and write and willing to teach. Once the person is identified, we have developed a little test to see whether they can do the teaching. At the moment we are not yet ready with our complete training module. So we use the training developed by BEP for NFE/AE instructors. The jag-jagi teachers are called **sahelis**. After the instructors' training, we give them 3 to 5 days intense training on women's empowement, some inputs on the Mahila Samakhya program and philosophy, and an exposure to different methods of teaching with the women's empowement concept. Thereafter, the sahelis come together every 2 months for further inputs and reinforcement.

The participation of women in the village education committee (VECs). We lobbied at the state level to get a policy formulated that the sakhis must be members of the village education committee. So sakhis attend the VECs, after which they come to the Mahila Samoohs and share what happened. They then take the problems of the Mahila Samooh back to the VECs. Both groups are strengthened by this participation.

Mahila Shikshan Kendras (MSKs) or condensed courses to enable women who had dropped out of school in childhood to complete their matriculation - 6 of them at the moment. We did not wait to set up the MSKs only after all the materials were ready and everything was in place. We did take a risk and trusted some of the good voluntary groups, or the District Resource Units, to run the MSK in their districts. This component is now 7 months old. We had decided that after 6 to 7 months, we would have a thorough assessment of how things are going, and this evaluation is going on now. But it is absolutely delightful to see some of the groups. The entire student body of one MSK - all 31 of them - were busy practicing Karate! One group is learning electric wiring and another carpentry, along the reading and writing. We try to provide any subject or activity they are interested in. Most of them were illiterate and have now come up to the level of class III. A few were primary school drop outs.

In Bihar we are not thinking of Mahila Shikshan Kendras for matriculation **per se**. Our goal is more to see that there is at least one literate woman in the distant villages of Bihar. In most of these villages, we still don't have a single literate women. We hope the Mahila Shikshan Kendra will fulfill this need. We have a 14 year old Tharu girl, the youngest in the MSK age group of 18 to 35,

who is the first girl to be able to write in that entire area. She has reached class III level now. I think by the time they are ready to leave, they will definitely come up to class V level. After the evaluation next year we may change our stand and decide to take only primary school drop-outs - we don't know. This whole MSK is an experiment, and we are confident that the **need which emerges** will tell us what to do next.

METHODS

As far as methodology is concerned, ours is more or less the same as what others use. In addition, we put up a lot of street plays. All the teams are getting trained in that. Now other groups like the BEP environment building team are asking us to send our women to do street plays for motivation. Initially, we were reluctant, but now we feel it is a recognition of our strength, so why not. We are also participating in many other environment-buiulding activities for education. Another activity we are at the moment busy with is composing songs and poems on the education of women. Hopefully, by the end of the year we will have one or two audio tapes ready. Education is also a very important theme for the Mahila Samooh meetings - what are they doing with regard to enrollment, retention, and so on.

Different groups have their own literacy content based on their needs and priorities. We have several groups in Ranchi now, whose sole activity is centred around protecting the forests. Women's groups guard the forest day and night to prevent logging. Such groups want their education inputs to be linked to forest issues. For every group, we try to relate learning to their daily life and struggles. Our concern is how to link reading and writing to their realities.

Contrary to what most people think, when poor women become aware of the need for education, there is no limit to what they will invest to fulfill that need. In Bhakarpur, a huge harijan village, neglected by everyone, a Mahila Samooh was formed. The first issue they took up was education for their children. The women themselves - helped by their menfolk - leveled a piece of land and put up a little shed. They asked a couple of literate boys to start teaching their children. The women collect donations from each other and are running the school - and they are very poor harijan women. Today there are 300 children sitting in that little shed there and we are hoping to make that into a model Mahila Samakhya Jag-Jagi school. It seems unbelievable, because we think that poverty is the main barrier - but I think it is lack of motivation.

We have a continuous training process for MSK staff, at three month intervals, when they undergo 5 to 6 days of intesive training in participatory methods, analysis, etc. They have already finished 25 days of training, another 5 - day module will be delivered in January. Basically, the teachers bring their experiences to the training where we try and identify their weak areas and provide inputs accordingly. I look at this first year as an experimental period - after this, I think we will really be in a position to give them what is required. We should take some risks, and build them up gradually. In the Jag-Jagi centers we have more than 5,000 women and girls studying, and we are expecting more. The demand is so much that we can not cope up with it now.

In the Jag-Jagi centers, women themselves are the supervisors. They monitor the sahelis the whole month, and at the end of the month, when money is deposited in the savings account of the Samooh by Mahila Samakhya, they pay the Saheli. If a Saheli needs leave she has to ask the Samooh. Two to three sahelis were fired by the Samooh and we felt very bad because money was spent in training them. But the women felt that those sahelis were useless since they were taking too many holidays and not coming regualrly. This hiring, firing, supervising, managing, is all done by the samoohs. Yes, they make mistakes sometimes - but has not the government made worse, and far more expensive mistakes?

PROBLEMS FACED

Like all other programs, we also have faced a few problems. In some areas, when men came to the centres and saw women practicing yoga, or learning cycling, they got worried by such non-traditional activities. Some of them also suspected the MSKs of various malpractices. In one MSK, some hired bullies (goodas) were sent to harass the women - we got a letter demanding that 4 women be murdered. At first, we waited and then a second threatening letter arrived. The women's reaction was remarkable. They took up bows and arrows, practiced, and guarded the place, saying that they will not close down the MSK. These are ordinary tribal women. This went on for 2 weeks, then again more letters came, and we became a bit frightened, because a man was kidnapped from the same area last year. So we decided to close that MSK for sometime. But they are back at work now and doing very well. The government people who are associated with us feel that we are not helping the women, they are learning nothing but how to fight.

There are lots of problems in Bihar - there is widespread cynicism that nothing positive can happen in Bihar. Even if a good center is running under their nose, people *nothing will change here*". They cannot believe the things which have actually happened.

SUSTAINING LITERACY EFFORTS

I have been working in this field for nearly 25 years. But the last 3 years have been the most exciting. My only fear is whether we can cope up with the demand for education, knowledge and information, and how are we going to face all these challenges. Women are getting almost restless now, because they want more. To keep up, we are trying to build networks with different groups so that even if Mahila Samakhya stops, the classes and this movement continues. And mainstreaming is also taking place, especially from the Kishori Jag-Jagi groups.

We also have a regular Mela (fair) for Jag-Jagi Kishories and women. This year we are planning to have some camps, but we were not sure whether the literacy camps would be as effective as regular Jag-Jagi centers. We have to discuss this with the women to find out if they are interested in camps. Some groups have said that they have nothing to do, the would like to come to study, but then if there is no center to follow this up, it will not be of much use. The debate goes on. There are so many other things to share, and struggles also, but I am conscious of the time. I see a ray of hope in Mahila Samakhya putting its interest into education. Also, teacher training institutes like DIET, are now requesting Mahila Samakhya to give them at least 2 to 3 hours input - and we are taking that up. We have to exert influence from all angles - policy, teacher training, all kinds of things. Our women teachers are no better than men teachers. So we have to really motivate and educate our women teachers. We do not have total literacy at the moment, but through this we may. We are also trying to see how much effort should we put into skill development in the Jag-Jagi centers. So far in Mahila Samakhya, we have not taken up any economic activities in Bihar. Now this question is coming up. Education, empowerment, skill development, how to put it together without minimizing empowerment and education.

Women having taken up the challenge. So we feel that even if Mahila Samakhya pulls out, these will continue. They have got a taste for education now.

Box 2.2 - SOME NOTES ON NON-FORMAL EDUCATION FOR WOMEN IN THAILAND

Wileka Leesuwan

There are a lot of organizations who run education programs on women and development. Their activities include education in school and non-formal education, vocational training, information services, community library, village reading places and radios. The targets of these programs range from community women leaders, housewives, rural women to women workers.

In the practice of non-formal education, there are five key principles.

1. Use of life-long education leads to development in women, families, community and society.
2. Life-long education emphasizes not on individual women but groups in order to have power in development.
3. Learning is a process based on situations and women problems.
4. Learning process does not stress on learning from text books but instead encourages women to think, analyze, discuss, plan and practice what they want to do and what they believe can solve their problems. This will lead to the real development.
5. The learning process focuses on localism and resources from the communities accompanied by modern technology. Moreover, focusing on life-long learning means linking government organizations with public and private organization, academicians, and community women leaders.

A. Content

Given that non-formal education should be learner-centered, problem-oriented and action based, the content of programs are planned according to the following:

- Consistent with existing situations and problems in the community which have different contexts. Hence some may focus on environment, AIDS, drug addiction and others on migration. In the northern region, they focus on child prostitutes while for central region, it is women laborers. The muslim women and their status are the thrust for the south.
- It should encourage women in a variety of skills from planning, project writing, marketing, accounting, facilitating meeting, delivering public speech, technology for communication and development, monitoring and evaluating and raising their awareness on laws affecting women.
- It should recognize women's needs and problems according to their backgrounds and professions. This also means including development areas such as natural resource conservation, integrated agriculture, long-life development, human-rights, community participation and democracy.

B. Learning and teaching approach

The programs rely on the following methods:

- Discussion and exchange of ideas, active planning to solve problems.
- Group study and self-studying are encouraged by using learning kits and teaching-aids.
- Focus on learning by doing.
- Continuous development of curriculum, teaching aids, learning kits as well as methods on how to effectively evaluate teacher manuals and teacher training which are consistent with the new concept of women life-long education.

C. The National Literacy Campaign Project

This campaign was conducted from 1983 to 1987 resulting in literates being increased to more than 500,000 among the 14-50 year old population. In this project, anybody could be a volunteer teacher to help teach the illiterates who are his/her fellow citizen. The learning/teaching method depends on their dexterity, such as each one teach one, and integrated methods. The place and time for learning is based on the readiness of the learning and teacher.

The learner need not pay for any expenses and the learners will even receive tests free of charge from the National Literacy Campaign. The Provincial Non-Formal Education Center administers the tests and those passing will receive a literacy certified document. This document can be transformed into accumulated marks to be used for continuing study in non-formal education of primary level.

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Box 2.3 - **GTZ - BEFARe**
FEMALE LITERACY

Waheeda Farouk Adam

In the rehabilitation of war-torn Afghanistan, there is a greater need for literate people and it is in this context that GTZ-BEFARe (German Government Organization for Technical Cooperation/Basic Education for Afghan Refugees) launched its female literacy programme. Catering to (a) Afghan women who are unable to attend formal schooling but want to become semi-literate and to (b) girls who are unable to go to the formal system because of unavailability of schools or for cultural reasons, the main objective of the literacy programme is to enable the graduates of literacy course to read, write, calculate and understand the simple texts of daily life.

While GTZ-BEFARe is aware that its literacy programme is not a substitute for formal education, they consider it crucial to make these Afghan women semi-literate so that they are able to contribute in the development and rebuilding of Afghanistan in a positive and productive way.

Hence before the start of a course, meetings are held with the heads of the tribes and elders of the camp to convince them to approve the programme. Women are keen to attend but without the consent of the males, they are unable to participate in the courses. It is therefore critical that the communities are involved to gain the male's approval. The courses are mainly conducted in the private residences offered by the community of the camp which in one way, guarantees that the programme is not imposed but is needed by the target group.

Lasting for a period of six months, the programme has two terms, one starting on the first of January and the other, in the first of July. While classes are held at times which are suitable to the women so that they do not affect their normal daily, the course runs for five days a week for one and a half to two hours daily.

The course has three levels starting with the Primer, then the Reader and, finally the Mathematics. In the Primer level, women have to undergo a series of tests meant to evaluate what they have learned before being invited to the next level. In the Reader phase, the participants improve their newly acquired literacy skills with a series of exercises and work assignments. In the last phase, the participants are taught numerals, simple calculations and tables taken from their daily lives. Maximum number for the Primer level is 20, which slowly declines through the levels due to various reasons from failures in tests, repatriation, or some family problems.

Each level has a complete set of books designed and developed for that phase. Using the GTZ-BEFARe materials with the help of guides, charts, cards and teaching materials, instructors lead the learning process.

For its female literacy program, dedicated women instructors are identified using the following criteria:

a) resident of the camp where the courses will be conducted;
b) at least 25 years old;
c) graduated at least from 8th grade;
d) mother tongue should be Pashto;
e) she and her family must be highly regarded and accepted by the community;
f) must present a list of 20 illiterate women who have shown their willingness to attend her literacy class; and
g) must have organized an acceptable place where she can conduct literacy course for 6 months.

Upon selection after the interviews, the women are either called to the office or are given training in their own camp/residential area, which lasts 10 days for every level. During this period, the women are exposed to extensive instruction on the teaching methodologies of the different levels as well as given guidance on the preparation of the courses and how to solve the learning problems of the participants. Final selection of instructors is made according to the performance of the women during training. To upgrade their skills, they have refresher seminars every 3 months.

Meanwhile, there are field officers who supervise instructors as well as monitor weekly attendance of instructors and participants. They are responsible for sending regular reports as well as giving periodical achievement tests to the learners. They also have teaching responsibilities as they take over classes when instructors are absent and provide on the job training to the instructors if and when required.

THE EDUCATION FORUM'S LITERACY-NUMERACY PROGRAM

Cecille Sipin

The Education Forum (EF) was established in 1979 as a taskforce on education of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP). Initially, it was organized to be a forum for educators who were then critically examining the state of Philippine education: its philosophy, objectives, curriculum content and instruction. Desiring to take concrete steps to reorient the country's educational system, it evolved to become a service institution which responds to the needs of all those who would share its vision and are engaged in education work -- formal schools both public and private, NGOs, community groups, and individuals from various sectors.

EF has established chapters on a nationwide scale coordinated by a national secretariat in Manila. Among its various programs, the major ones are the following:

1. School for the Advancement of Nationalist Education or SANE for seminar-workshops, symposia, and lectures on education issues, theories and approaches, study group for teachers of the same discipline, and exposure-immersion programs. This also provides trainers' training for Basic and Functional Literacy-Numeracy.

2. Alternative Instructional Materials or AIM for development and publication of instructional materials, teaching guides, and sourcebooks for teachers. It also serves as a clearing house for teachers working on some curriculum materials.

3. Teacher Assistance Program or TAP is a monthly (for 10 months, following the schoolyear) publication to update teachers on relevant and contemporary issues in economy, culture and politics.

4. Education Resource Center or ERC provides data on education and makes available resource materials to interested institutions and groups in education.

5. Solidarity Program or SOP conducts lectures, training workshops, exposure-immersion trips and other services for visiting foreign educators and other groups outside the education sector.

6. Education with Production or EWP which pilots projects on education with production in 5 sites in the country.

A. HISTORY OF LITERACY EFFORTS

Prior to 1986, EF work was mainly with the formal education sector and it did get involved with non-formal education but only in a consulting capacity.

A priest from Nueva Ecija who was doing apostolate work with indigenous Filipinos approached us and appealed that we conduct a trainer's training in literacy-numeracy for the Dumagats along the Ambuklao Dam area who, because of their lack of education, were exposed to manipulation and exploitation by traders from the lowland.

Moved by the plight of the Dumagats, we dared run the training-workshop despite the inadequacy of our experience in non-formal education. We had six trainees from this indigenous group, two of whom knew how to read and write and 4 were non-literate. We survived that training. Armed with what we knew then about education, we met them with what they had. From there we developed the module which went through several revisions before having the form which we are using today. That experience was indeed a milestone in our education work. We arrived at an important insight - that non-literates are not simply people who do not know how to read and write. They have concepts. They possess knowledge. For instance, they have the concept of numbers

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but they do not know the conventional way of presenting it the way which is familiar to the dominant culture.

After that initial involvement, we went deeper into literacy-numeracy work. Our next significant experience was with the Agtas of Sierra Madre who were dubbed as the "poorest of the poor" in the Prelature of Infanta. In partnership with SAKABINSA, an Agta people's organization, and the Tribal Center for Development (TCD), we followed-up the efforts initiated by ECTF (Ecumenical Council for Tribal Filipinos) for in basic education. In February 1988, we facilitated the setting up of a continuing education program which included curriculum development and community teachers' training. We operated on the assumption that the best program in education is that which is evolved by the people themselves upon an assessment of their needs and their capacities through their collective and organized efforts and at their own pace.

Our work with Agta community teachers lasted for several months, even years. We have refined our basic literacy-numeracy module, produced a detailed curricular program which integrates communication arts, math, science and social studies, detailed lessons plans, a detailed evaluation program, a collection of Agta songs, riddles, folk tales, and original stories which became part of materials for the Agta reading program. A newsletter entitled KABINSA was also printed.

By 1989, EF was at the thick of non-formal education. We responded to numerous requests for trainings and assistance for literacy-numeracy programs of the various sectors: urban poor women, rural women, fisherfolks, farmers, formal school outreach programs. Now we have accumulated enough experience and produced materials to adequately respond to the varying needs of our clientele.

We had another breakthrough when a similar education NGO in Italy, the Centro Informazione e Educazione Allo Sviluppo (CIES) agreed to be our partner in "an education with production" project to be piloted in 5 selected sites of the country. To date, the project is on-going in Irosin (Sorsogon), General Nakar (Quezon), Magballo (Negros Occidental), San Miguel (Surigap del Sur) and Freedom Island (Paranaque, Metro Manila). It was a milestone because we were able to pilot test the theories about education and society which we have long been expanding. One of which, that education cannot be isolated from the lives of the people.

The project, which has been conceived together with the people who are members of the people's organizations in the area is also managed through their organized efforts. It integrates education with production activities. Thus every site has a demonstration farm for sustainable agriculture which includes for instance, vegetables and rice production, livestock, blacksmithing. Each site also has a training center to serve as venue for lessons on the various production phases. Besides the trainings on production there are also sessions on cooperatives, leadership formation and disasters preparedness. Simultaneous with activities in the demo farm and training center is the literacy-numeracy component with centers distributed in several areas in the community either in the houses volunteered by the people themselves, in barangay halls, classrooms in the public school of the area, or in literacy centers built through the people's efforts as their counterpart in the project. Through these trainings in Basic and Functional Lit-Num, we are able to reach a wider group in the community.

From its beginnings in 1990, the project has grown and expanded beyond its original intentions. Various linkages have been established and forms of cooperation have been realized with other NGOs and people's organizations, higher institutions of learning, church groups, government units/organizations and other groups in the community.

B. SALIENT CHARACTERISTICS OF EF's LITERACY-NUMERACY PROGRAM

▸ The approach is comprehensive in the sense that it addresses all aspects of

community life. It assists the people in their economic needs by providing skills that will directly aid them in their income-generating activities as individuals and as groups.

It deepens consciousness and appreciation of the community's history and culture: their prevailing beliefs, norms, values and practices. Fresh meanings are given to certain practices and activities which ensure its transmission to the next generation.

It promotes self-help. It empowers individuals and groups to understand their problems and devise ways of solving them, leading them to form desks and committees within their respective organizations for sustained action. In General Nakar, Irosin and Magballo, the community teachers formed themselves into education desks to start exercising autonomy and generate resources thus preparing for the eventual pull-out of external project funding.

▸ It utilizes community resources both human and non-human. Trainers are recruited from the community, most of whom are elementary school undergraduates. Community folk through their organizations recruit prospective trainers and trainees. Training venues are provided by the community. The community teachers themselves develop instructional materials needed for the program.

▸ The program provides for continuing education with graduates of basic literacy-numeracy course proceeding to the functional literacy-numeracy program. Content-wise, the functional literacy-numeracy program is flexible and open-ended, as derived from expressed needs and development aspiration of the people.

▸ The content and methodology, and recruitment of trainers differ from the conventional system:.

- there is a drastic reduction in the number of hours spent to teach basic literacy-numeracy. From the usual number of 160 - 200 hours, our method enables us to teach basic literacy-numeracy within a range of from 25 to 50 hours;

- the content is drawn from community life, proposing practical and feasible solutions to these problems experienced by them, its basic method utilizes ADIDS (Activity, Discussion, Input, Discussion, Synthesis);

- the schedule fits the work schedule of people in the community.

▸ It uses the national language (Filipino) and other Philippine languages as medium in literacy work.

▸ It provides a venue for more active participation of women in community life by encouraging them to organize themselves and actively participate in the education program either as trainees or as community teachers.

C. SOME PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY OUR LIT-NUM WORKERS

In brief, the following problems are common in all literacy sites:

a. difficulty in recruitment because the non-literates are afraid of being exposed, or they see no need of attending classes, they have managed until this far somehow;

b. irregularity in attendance and group meetings.

People are busy for economic survival. They don't immediately see the long term effect benefit of education. In fact some of them view schooling as leisure, a luxury for a person of adequate means.

D. THE WOMEN IN EF LITERACY-NUMERACY WORK

Our long years in education work validate, which observation I am sure you will also share, that education is a major concern of women. Owing perhaps to our biological role

at some point of our lives, we respond readily to those matters which have to do with formation. Our spirit of nurturance, a natural tendency for caring, for protecting, developing and sustaining life make us reliable managers of education programs.

In depressed areas where non-literacy is deep, it is the women whom we observe to be taking the lead in education. The various literacy-numeracy programs implemented in our project sites attest to the impressive work of reliable women with valor and tenacity to oversee programs under the most difficult circumstances like militarization and acute economic deprivation. These community teachers who themselves are hungry and burdened with survival problems are zealous teachers and change agents to their people.

With a firm grasp of the situation in the community, they are able to devise relevant curriculum programs. With an understanding of their people's particular culture, they are able to see approaches which stimulate their people to learn. The women's attention to detail, their intuitive sense, and predisposition to care for life account for their success as administrators of learning programs.

We started our education program without no particular stress on women whether in addressing their plight or in drawing from their resources. We said it is already included because it is a comprehensive program. This has changed. We realized that the multi-layered program of women requires special attention. We noted, too, that the trend in all sites is for women to take enthusiastically to the program that will improve their lot whether as students or teachers. Where there is a lack of educational service there is a woman ready to take over. They are usually the first ones to respond to organizing efforts and are quick to comprehend the function of education for empowerment. In the next stages of our literacy-numeracy program we have made a commitment to respond to the particular issues of our women and look into the wealth of possibilities in them in providing basic educational services for our people.

Box 2.4 - **SOME TIPS IN DOING LITERACY WORK**

Maria Luisa C. Doronila

- In doing literacy work, one should start from the knowledge and reality of people, citing an example the word "demolition" as something that comes first to the minds of the urban poor communities, as this word represents something that is a dominant component in their lives.
- One should "be quick" in teaching people the 3 R's because of the necessity of being literate and because some people do not have that much time to devote to studying.
- Teach first the strokes, then the vowels, followed by the generative words, site words like "*and, si, sila* -- as opposed to writing blocks and script letters repeatedly like what conventional teachers do.
- The problem of our formal education system is the long and tedious process one has to undergo to learn to read and write. This leaves a strong impact on the learner if he fails in this endeavor, for it may lower his self-esteem and his self-confidence.
- Three questions that should be asked in making literacy programs for women:

1. What should we talk about?

- ▸ Depending on the knowledge of the woman, one can talk of problems, life situations, even what detergent bar is better or whether one is using deep well or tap water. One can also talk of the woman's experiences as a wife, a mother, a sister, a grand-mother, a teacher, etc.
- ▸ Topics may then progress to more deeper issues.
- ▸ Facilitator in this case remains just that, a facilitator, and not one who will dictate what the topic will be.
- ▸ Evade the effect of a "dominant culture" that may act in determining what one will talk about
- ▸ One should be aware of the dangers of the textbook, as it determines the parameters of the course, the boundary of the learning experience that the reader or the student faces.

2. How should we talk about them?

- ▸ This is basically a pedagogic process.
  - There are two models of teaching:

  a. transmission -- wherein the facilitator dictates or determines the topic for discussion and provides the data or content;
  b. interpretative -- wherein everybody has an input and everybody contributes in determining meanings of concepts or topics and then everything is summarized afterwards.

3. Why are we talking about these?

- ▸ These topics are important because they refer to the situations of women and their perceptions of these situations.
- ▸ We have to define ourselves and negotiate our positions in relation to our personal lives, the community, etc. and even where love fits in with everything
- ▸ One question that women may ask may be: How shall we define ourselves in relation to others and to ourselves too?

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Box 2.5 - **Te Whiri Kaupapa Ako** (Maori Development Committee of the Adult Reading and Learning Assistance)

Sarah Grey

Te Whiri Kaupapa Ako defines literacy as the ability to read, to know the Maori mother tongue, ability to write, to listen, to speak, to think critically, make sense of the world, to participate effectively in society, acquire technological skills, gain knowledge of numeracy, language and its customs. As an institution it aims to: promote literacy awareness, build a coordinated literacy approach in Aotearoa (New Zealand), provide quality policy advice, promote and participate in research, maintain and support volunteers and paid workers and to make learning materials and resources accessible.

As part of its services, it supports new and existing Maori literacy providers, assistance for funding applications for Maori literacy provision, provision of opportunity for networking and training for students, training for literacy coordinators and management, conduct tutor training for Maori literacy workers and experienced Maori literacy trainers and promotes and assists literary research.

For Maori literacy, funding comes from government, but we have to fight for it. Maori's were totally ripped off by this colonization, the young generation was brought up in English and we feel that our youth today have no identity. In 1981 Maori women sought to regain (what was lost), we wanted Maori to be spoken again, Maori people to learn again as we strive for partnership and equality. And for Maori children, to look back and learn who they are. I teach English and writing but the other children are teaching Maori. The children decides on which language to use and since it is community based, they interact with local Maoris from the rural area.

Four years ago, I took the opportunity to be a student, to learn how to write in English as I saw the need to grow myself. There are other illiterate women in our area and it is up to them if they would see me as a role model. I was able to publish a book, attend trainer's trainings and was selected to attend this conference.

Box 2.6 - **The Korean Research Institute for Women's Life (KRIWL)**

Chan Nam Chung

The Korea Research Institute for Women's Life in Seoul, Korea is an institution that aims to provide the necessary education and information for the promotion of women's status in a developing society, to serve the community by developing qualified women for the work force and, to analyze and develop general cultural program for women.

The Institute provides programs which focus on the needs of illiterate women. It produces basic literacy programs in two levels. After the completion of basic literacy, learners proceed to continuing education programs offered by the Institute. These are of the following types: post-literacy program, which consolidates literacy skills and preparatory to further study, an equivalency program which enables one to reach middle or even high school standards, and the general educational program which focuses on the improvement of the quality of life.

Materials used were selected and developed by the KRIWL to suit the characteristics of each level and type of learners. A group of experts developed the manuals, as well as suggested topics, content and format of the materials to be produced. Feedbacks are used as basis for revisions of these materials.

THE LITERACY CIRCLE

Suddha Sundaraman

The concept of the literacy circle is a genuine brain child of the literacy movement. As the Arivial Iyakkam (Science Movement) project period drew to a close, it was essential to evolve a strategy for the emerging situation. From mobilizing around literacy per se, the activists found that literacy could not be sustained if people did not mobilize around other issues close to their heart.

Hence, continuing education had to make an entry into the village collective. The entry point was the literacy circle, which is a coming together of neo-literates, organizers, resource person and those in the village who wished to join the Arivoli ("the light of knowledge" - viz., literacy) process anew. The circle would meet about once a month where the organizer would have to plan out the basic program along with the resource persons at the center. As the literacy circle aims to draw on the knowledge of the village participants, and involve them in the process, it is important that the program would have to be flexible and open to change.

The literacy circle also aimed at creating a cultural educational nucleus in every village or habitat, which could develop its skills continuously, and become a live transmitter of information that is needed locally. It will consciously cater to sections who have been marginalized by the formal school system hence the literacy circle puts special emphasis on mobilizing women, girl children going out to work, and people belonging to disadvantaged sections, both socially and economically. The circle also hopes to infuse new life into the cultural traditions of these groups - be it singing cradle songs or songs of lament, reciting riddles or folk dance and drama.

As the circle participant sees the books on display, hears their content and is drawn by them, the desire to read becomes greater and transforms itself into a direct reading habit. Once a library becomes functional around this activity, interaction and education would occur simultaneously, and continuing education could become self-sustaining.

While the idea of the literacy circle is ambitious, the vision is firmly rooted in the possibilities created by the literacy network on the ground. The implementation envisages the following inputs:

- district level resource persons to produce and collate material for the literacy circles: including bulletins, neo-literate creations, story books, story collections, and information booklets, etc.

- district level organizer, to evolve a monthly plan, sit with block and sub-block organizers, ensure it is put into action and review the feed back. Training needs to be identified as well, and organized accordingly.

- sub block and local organizer-volunteers to be constantly helped to upgrade their capacity in conducting the circle innovatively. Ultimately, the skill of the village level volunteer in maintaining the interest of the participants is the key to making the circles function effectively.

In terms of implementation, the general experience has not been positive as many districts complain of the inability to translate the concept into activity on the ground. But perhaps two examples where it has worked well will encourage practitioners to pursue this strategy.

A. THE LITERACY CIRCLE EXPERIENCE IN VILLAGE K. METTUPATTI

The seven of us trudged into the village situated 2 km. away from the nearest but stop at around 6:30 p.m. It was dark when we arrived, but the children surrounded us immediately and led us to the multipurpose reading room which is the library, the science corner, the focal point of the literacy activity in that area. The occasional street light does little to dispel the darkness. This is Harijan colony area. The organizers (all women) say that drop-outs were much more in the other colony, here the interest to learn is still alive and literacy circles functions well.

We are given tea by the local organizer - cum - resource person - cum - volunteer as and when needed. He has encouraged his wife too, and she is the one who is now going around informing the people that the Arivoli team has arrived. Very soon, under a tube light, some 70 people have congregated. About 40 men, 30 women. And of course, children. They liven up the place with their chatter. But it will interfere with circle activities. One of the organizers draws them away to tell them stories and play games with them.

The circle activity begins with a folk song rendered powerfully by one of the neo-literates, exhorting all to sit down and watch the proceedings (the traditional start to the folk songs), and then a Arivoli song by the organizers. Participants not only had to introduce themselves but had to precede their names with an edible item beginning with the same letter - and what laughter ensued! Laddu- Lakshmi, Payasam-Padmini, etc., are produced amidst the hilarity.

One of the organizers tells the story of a person of unsound mind who wanders into a village and is nurtured by the blacksmith's wife for 10 years. By some chance, his brother discovers him, and comes to claim him. Kirubhu Shanmugham, the mad beggar, is in reality very rich. The whole village moans his leaving and the blacksmith's wife refuses any offer of money. Did the listeners like the story? Yes, who doesn't like stories! Why did you like it? Various reasons. An old woman puts it best when she says that the blacksmith's wife, by refusing money for having taken care of Shanmugham for 10 years, shows that in villages people are still willing to help others without expecting money.

This is followed by a math game, where the participant has to find out how many coconuts there were initially. Soon, 27-year-old Mariamma, a neo-literate, has found the answer.

It's time for riddles. The people-especially the older ones - are stock full of riddles. Their minds go off at a tangent we are not able to comprehend - the neo-literate win hands down. Organizers are busy noting down new riddles for the next bulletin, learners and volunteers are thrilled with their victory.

Then an imaginative story line for participants to pay attention and discover the word that has been omitted deliberately during the second round. There is some confusion initially. Once it is clear, there is no hesitation. "What movie did you see last?", asks Malathy (organizer) to Dhanalakshmi who is 16 years old, working in the match industry. After Arivoli, she can read. She has seen Thaimmanasu - Maternal Uncle. Did she like it?. Yes, there were lots of remarks exposing politicians - she liked it. Can she write the name of the movie? That answer was not so forthcoming. Quickly one organizer comes forth, hands around pen and paper. Everyone has to write the names of the last 2 or 3 movies which they liked. Oh - Oh, some of the neo-literates have remembered there is work at home. The local organizer tells them they need not worry, there is no compulsion, the volunteers are there to help if needed. Some write laboriously, some write many names fast, spellings rather weak on the whole. But it's done. Volunteers go around, offering help.

Well, it's 9:30 p.m. We didn't notice the time pass by. If we don't finish now, catching the last bus will a problem. The village organizer insists we should eat and go - arrangements have already been made. We walk back to catch the 1:00 p.m. bus, and before we go to bed, our circle meets, reviews the experience. A very impressive performance indeed!

B. THE SIVAKSI LITERACY CIRCLE

We also visited an area in Sivakasi - famous for its fireworks and match industry. There were many young girls in this literacy circle - all working in nearby factories. There was a water-passing game which livened up the session immediately, apart from making the whole place wet and requiring sacks to be brought for sitting down again. Within the same structure, a lot of variety was introduced. The participants were asked to tell a story. A learner came out with a ghost story, a heated discussion on the existence and non-existence of ghosts is initiated. Angamma's brother has seen a ghost. No, she hasn't seen it herself. Murugeswari has the last word. "We know some unnatural incident occurred at that spot, so if anything extraordinary happens, we blame it on ghost", she says. She has quite rightly made it a question of psychology.

In this circle, the organizers have planned a small skit. It's a mime with the central character being a symbol of god as worshipped by Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The same central character's pose is alternately shifted by those belonging to different religions. Ultimately they start fighting amongst themselves. The central character - the symbol of god - lies fallen, uncared for. The participants discuss the theme of how communal disharmony is created by the worshippers, not god. After all, god is one. Why should there be fights? So it goes on. Religious tolerance is a vital presence and we are happy to see people's positive responses on this issue.

The news bulletin is presented. News items are questioned before being accepted. The scandal of the holy man who has raped young girls in his Ashram (religious center) and had videos fitted in the bathroom, is discussed threadbare. Some are aware that AIDWA (a women's organization) has intervened in this issue. They agree that for highlighting and handling issues like this, organizations like this are important.

A small word game is played. Riddles are exchanged. A song. Tea all around. And it is time for reluctant leave taking. The warmth extended to visitors is very inspiring and touching. Here young girls assure us that they will never leave Arivoli, they will continue learning. 'There speaks the militant working class spirit' we said, and returned to our center.

Such fascinating experiences are increasingly becoming part of the post literacy movement in district like Kamarajar, N. Arcot, Pasumpon and Pudukottai. But they are still sporadic. With wider implementation, the literacy circle is capable of achieving a great deal, and the impetus needs to be sustained.

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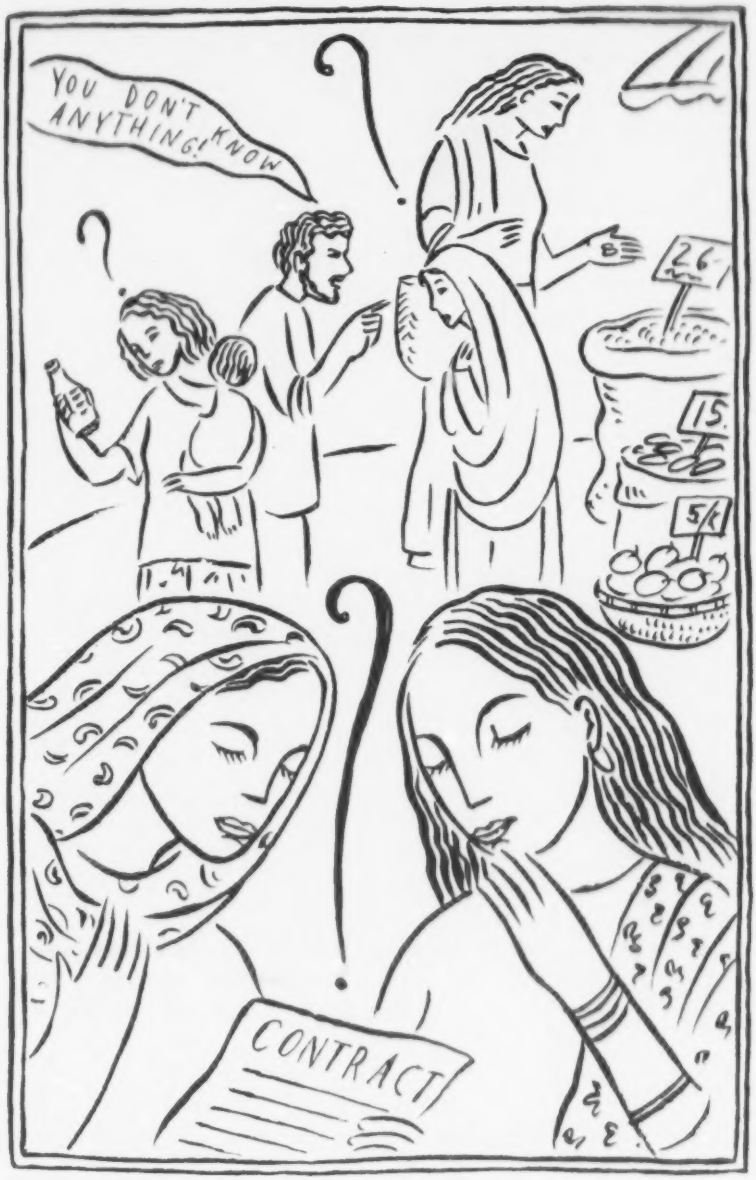
CHAPTER III

EMERGING ISSUES IN THE CONTENT OF LITERACY CURRICULUM AND MATERIALS



DEVELOPMENT OF METHODS AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR WOMEN IN BANGLADESH

Rokeya Rahman Kabeer

It is difficult for me to write anything about the development of education materials and its presentation to rural women without saying something about Saptagram Nari Swanirvar Parishad (SNSP) itself. Because the character of this organization itself led to the development of a specialized curriculum.

Saptagram Nari Swanirvar Parished (SNSP) was formed in June, 1976 an organisation for women and by women, working in the rural community of Bangladesh. The women who had launched SNSP have themselves been acutely aware of the subordinate and exploited position women hold in the society in which they live. Though they have come from far more privileged backgrounds, they themselves have been victims of overt discrimination or patriarchal conspiracies, where male privilege has been assured simply by mobilizing the routine institutional procedures. Unlike male run NGOs, SNSP women were understandably more aware of the difficulty they would face in combatting the oppressive status quo which prevails in the social structure.

For development to be equitable as well as successful, poor women have to mount a challenge to existing society in order to achieve their rights. Their current inability to do so is rooted in their socially isolated and materially dependent position in society. Thus SNSP's strategy has been to concentrate on the organisation, conscientisation and mobilization of the women in our target group.

Our original objectives were to work among women of the deprived sections of the rural community in Bangladesh, to make these women conscious of the root causes of their economic, social and legal problems, and try to help them seek solutions, to initiate women's organizations at the village level, to provide credit to women's groups, to encourage them to get involved in cooperative economic activities, thereby giving them an independent source of income, to make them conscious of the health and nutritional needs of themselves and their families, to encourage family planning among the women and last but not least, to provide education to rural adult women and their children.

We have now almost completed two decades of our activities in the field. And it must be made clear here that the objectives which had originally been formulated in the rather remote and stratified atmosphere of the capital, Dhaka, had to be adjusted when face to face interaction took place between our organisation and our constituency. Through the years, adjustment had taken place at a slow but deliberate pace. What had stood the test of time was that women must be organized at the group level, as in unity lay their strength. But what has emerged as being of primary importance is education for our clients i.e. adult women.

Today, instead of the extensive seven objectives, we have come to realize that we can achieve all our objectives through two core programs, which will complement one another, and should play a crucial role in empowering women. First is the Credit program and the other is functional education for adult women, which aims to provide a clear idea of the sources of oppression of women, a means of how to combat the situation and a complementary skill which will assist them in managing their economic activities.

Our credit program, after few initial hiccups, which was expected, took off quite well, and within a few years a large number of women's groups got involved in non-traditional income generating activities on a cooperative level. But we faced problems when we tried to introduce education among the mature women. They showed a complete lack of interest in educating themselves. We understood their resistance to accept our program for adult education, but we persisted

with our efforts. It took years before women started coming forward to attend our education classes.

In the early years, we used government primers for our students, but soon we realized that it would take years to provide them with basic knowledge of reading and numeracy. At about this time, we came across functional education materials produced by BRAC. Sometime in 1979 we introduced our adult students to BRAC functional education syllabus but despite all the efforts to expand our education program, progress was far from satisfactory. It was not until 1983 that SNSP's literacy programme received a significant boost. This came about as a result of an incident that drove home the need for education to our target group.

A. The Story of Women in Faridpur Sadar Thana

Under the intensive Rural Works Program funded by SIDA and NORAD and implemented in collaboration with the Bangladesh Government, women were given special consideration and hired in equal proportion to men to build a long road which passed through our project area in Faridpur Sadar Thana. As a result, most women who were hired in the construction work were our group members. According to the contract the laborers were to be paid weekly, and for removing a thousand cubic feet of earth they were to receive Tk. 200. However when time for weekly payment came, all the laborers were short changed since instead of receiving Tk. 200 per thousand cubic feet of soil, they received only Tk. 125.

The laborers also had to give their thumb prints on the master roll. Our colleagues in the field did not waste any time to inform our women members that they had not received the wage they were entitled to, and by putting their finger prints in the master roll, they had legalized the illegal action of the project supervising committee. When the women members were informed of this fraud, angry women laid down their tools and brought out a demonstration against the action of the committee. It was the first time in the history of Faridpur District, our project catchment area, that 500 angry landless women demonstrated. However, when the women reached the District Commissioner of Faridpur they were asked to give in writing their complaint. They had to come back to our colleague to write their representation. By the end of the week the matter was amicably settled, and most importantly, a psychological victory was won by the women.

This incident proved to be the turning point in our education program among the adult women. It gave us the opportunity to recognize that this incident would never have taken place if the women themselves had been able to read, since the correct amount due to them was clearly stated in the master roll. Nor would there be any need for them to come to us for writing down their representation to the relevant authorities. Happily, they found this argument most convincing, and began to spread the word as never before.

Our adult literacy class started expanding fast. But then we came face to face with problems. By this time however, we were dealing with far more socially conscious women. Years of workshops, seminars and group discussions on women's life in our society, had made them conscious of their own position in the environment they were living in. They were also far more confident because by this time they were earning money through income generating activities they were involved in.

Furthermore women had learned to protest against exploitation, understood the united strength of women and had become daring enough to challenge the family exploitation, even if that protest was muted.

B. Making Literacy Materials Gender Sensitive

By then these women challenged the BRAC syllabus which we had adopted in our Functional Education classes. All syllabi, whether evolved by NGOs or the Government, had not yet responded to the upsurge of gender awareness in the society. For instance, the BRAC syllabus projects the picture of men in every sphere of social

activities, except while portraying the curse of having a big family, where a picture of a women was shown surrounded by a number of malnourished children, and another chapter dealing with the need for cleanliness. In one sat two women picking lice from their hair surrounded by slovenly children playing in the courtyard. The huts looked dark and shaded because of the presence of short trees and shrubs all around it. In another picture, a women is shown busily sweeping the courtyard. This time the courtyard is clean, no children, slovenly or otherwise, no hens, and no ducks. The shrubs shading the hut had been cut down and the hole has been filled. And presto! Just by waving the broom, the woman has cleaned the house.

These pictures clashed with the knowledge women had gained from involvement with SNSP. The objections raised by the learners were both critical and relevant. "Men have been shown in all other charts being boatman, shopkeeper, working in the field etc. except when it comes to family planning. Then it is a woman. Why is it not men's responsibility also to play a role there? Is it the exclusive duty of women to keep the house clean? Should men of the house have some responsibilities to maintain the house neat and clean? Should he not fill up the hole in the courtyard? Should men not cut the unwanted growth around the house? Why do these pictures depict the same old nonsense?"

It was gratifying to hear such pertinent questions, but the fact remained that a more appropriate syllabus had to be found. One that would better reflect the needs of these women. Unfortunately, it was easier said than done, for despite all our searching, not only in Bangladesh, but in the neighboring countries like India and Pakistan, as well as in countries like England, Australia, America and Canada, no suitable books were to be found. Given that fact, there was only one option left, to create such a syllabus ourselves.

It was a mammoth task. As we had no frame of reference, we had to start from scratch, creating a syllabus which would be acceptable to women. A slow and tedious assignment, it involved a considerable amount of research and compiling of facts. The earlier cliches had to be discarded, and a more relevant and factual approach was required. Lessons had to deal with such contemporary issues as marriage and divorce and women's rights. At the same time, this would provide a opportunity to address the whole range of oppression and inequalities that women have to face.

Nor was it just the negative aspects we had to focus on, since it was equally important to highlight those instances where women had managed to achieve a modicum of success. After all, it was this kind of success that would breed confidence and provide the courage to take on further battles.

And thus began the task of compiling a syllabus that would open with the most elementary lessons, and evolve step by step to cover all the topics that are relevant to women. Arithmetic would have a primary place, since it was of vital importance to activities related to income generating. The whole process took five years to collate, as it was based on feedback from the field, but it was finally completed, and today it is proving to be a most effective tools.

C. Preparing Teachers for our Instructional Materials

Saptagram educational material is specialized and gender oriented, so that the teachers have to receive special training in order to present our education material properly to the learners.

- Teachers who are appointed have to initially spend one month moving around with the field workers in order to understand and absorb the philosophy and objectives of Saptagram.

- They are then trained for an additional month at the Saptagram Training Center where they are given lessons on how to teach classes.

- Well-trained education supervisors

keep them under close scrutiny once they have begun teaching to see how they have presented the materials. It is through relevant words that students first learn the alphabet. They then go on to learn and appreciate the meaning of the word, and its relevance to their own lives. Each word in the primers has been specially selected to present the different aspects of a woman's life. So learning each word might take a whole day, and sometimes even longer, depending on the length of the discussions which might ensue.

- There is of course a teacher's guide, which deals exhaustively on the methods of dealing with each word in the primer. With the assistance of the guidebook, the trained teachers can easily present the material to the students in a manner which they can understand as well as capture their attention and interest.

- One of the most important subjects in the syllabus is numeracy, which starts from simple addition and subtraction and then goes into more complicated accounts-keeping. Therefore, teachers are given special training on keeping simple accounts.

- Finally, for those students who prove to be especially good in accountancy, they are then brought to the center where they receive further training to develop their accountancy skills from trained accountants.

D. Contents of Literacy Booklet

At the primary stage, students follow a booklet which contains thirty-nine words and phrases about health, religious customs, work, social and political rights, and the environment. The aim is to teach women the letters that make up the words in the primer and at the same time, generating discussion about the meaning of the words and their relevance to women's lives. The primer also has a simple numeracy section, introducing women to basic accounts management. This course lasts for six months.

To lead the women through the booklet, teachers use flash cards and a large format seventy-six page primer. The words that are included therein are as follows:

Adhikar	-	**Rights**
Aday	-	**Extract**
Akota	-	**Unity**
Mahajan	-	**Moneylender**
Union	-	**Local Government Administrative Unit**
Purdah	-	**The Custom of Seclusion of Women**
Kabin	-	**Marriage Document**
Talak	-	**Divorce**
Balla Bibaho	-	**Child Marriage**
Tipshoi	-	**Fingerprint**
Lekhapora	-	**Reading and Writing**
Ojon	-	**Weights and Measures**
Thikana	-	**Address**
Chithi	-	**Letter**
Joutuk	-	**Dowry**
Bohu Bibaho	-	**Multiple Marriage**
Reen	-	**Loan**
Gorib	-	**Poor**
Bhaggchashi	-	**Sharecropper**
Mojuri	-	**Daily Wage**
Shoshon	-	**Oppression**
Nirjatan	-	**(physical or mental) Mistreatment; Torture; Violence**
Jhagra	-	**Fight**
Julum	-	**Torture (similar to Nirjatan)**
Shalish	-	**Mediation by a Village Council**
Fandibaj	-	**Conman**
Thana	-	**Local Government Administrative Unit**
Ghush	-	**Bribe**
Shongothon	-	**Organisation**
Bari	-	**House**
Gachpala	-	**Trees and Plants**
Diarrhoea	-	**Diarrhoea**
Khabar	-	**Food**
Dhilemi	-	**Laziness**
Dukkho	-	**Sorrow**
Ashar	-	**Certain Month**
Short	-	**Honest**
Vote	-	**Vote**
Ai	-	**Income**

All these words portray day to day problems that rural women face, as well as the methods that they can adopt to fight back. Out of all these words, we feel that one of the most important pictures is entitled "address". The picture shows the postman handing a letter to a woman, who is obviously a widow and alone. This, to SNSP, is a very important picture. Women have no identity. You can only write to them care of their husband, father, brother or another male relative. What we are trying to do is to ensure that women get recognition as individuals by society. That women do exist as individual entities.

The second part of the education program develops reading and numeracy skills. Women get a book of five stories written in simple language, with a message aimed at deepening women's understanding of issues, introduced at the primary stage. The illustrated stories touch on subjects like the importance of registering a marriage, family planning, procedures for acquiring land etc. To encourage discussion and thought, students are questioned at the end of each story. It is at the last stage where numeracy and accountancy becomes the main focus, where problems start. Women tend to lose interest and drop out. We are not sure yet how many will learn to do more advanced accounts, but we do plan to teach at least five members of each group advanced accountancy. If we can manage more, it will be welcome.

We also have two booklets, each of about thirty pages, on health and nutrition. The first focuses on common diseases, causes and symptoms and describes preventive measures. The information is presented in very simple form, and is designed to maintain the women's interest in reading after they have finished the second part of the course.

To provide our learners with follow-up reading materials, we have a plan of setting up libraries at each center, which will have books to stimulate their continued interest in reading. We also publish bi-monthly magazines, which contain the writings of the new literates. This is to encourage them to develop their writing skills. They write poetry, prose, stories and so on which are then circulated among all the members.

Box 3.1 - ON LANGUAGE AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Ma. Luisa Doronilla
(based on the discussion of the Regional Seminar)

As far as the language of instruction in non-formal education, the language being used is either Filipino or their own language but the problem is the dearth of reading materials because most of the publications in this country are in English but now more and more copies are being printed in Filipino. Even now we are still talking about the medium of instruction in schools. The language of instruction in formal education is English for Mathematics and Science. This is a highly debated issue. And Filipino will be used as supplement in all other subject areas. But in adult non-formal education, we use local dialects and Filipino. But materials are the problem as they are only in one language.

And now about the question of indigenous knowledge, this is a new issue, but I think we are understanding it from different points of view. Most of the time you are talking about indigenous knowledge in exotic terms. Exotic, you know, as in curiosity, something that we need to know because it is popular, it has become popular. But the point that I was raising earlier is precisely that our country learned to be literate in a new language and to cope with new knowledge, Western knowledge. Meanwhile much of the traditional, usable existing community knowledge is in the oral mode. This is not taught in school.

So we have two kinds of knowledge in our heads: first, the traditional, the community everyday knowledge not included, without the possibility of being discussed in the classroom and therefore, without the possibility of being modified, revised, discarded or examined for its utility. There is also the second kind of knowledge which we call literate knowledge encoded in textbooks, encoded in our materials mostly from a Western tradition. This is something that we need to understand but we do not have a consensus about what is indigenous knowledge. Some of us will say, okay you put in something there about tribal people, the dances. But I think this is a very limited meaning associated with indigenous culture. We have different meanings as of now. May I propose to call it community knowledge?

Box 3.2 - LANGUAGE AND REPRESENTATION

Anita Rampal
(based on the discussion in the Regional Seminar)

The question of language should be advanced because language is a representation and a perspective by itself. It is a crucial aspect and has a major role in the culture of silence. The district should decide the language to be used for literacy classes, both formal and non-formal. A study has to be made on the language of curriculum materials as to whether it is imperative, patronizing, transactional and subjective roles as against context embedded in the language. The sentiment of the language, gender sensitivity and use of words are important to the people.

It must also be remembered that people have a rich representation of their own, hence diversity in representations. It must be more than just how many times women have been mentioned compared to men. Preparation of primers must have the people's perspective. It must also be consultative in dealing with the notion of conservation e.g. forest, planting trees, etc. There should be flexibility in changing the materials.

When we say, science education for all, who do we mean when we say ALL and what kind of science? The content and form of knowledge must be redesigned. Literacy should create a demand for education and not the way it is right now where schools are creating a sense of failure.

DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY LEARNING MATERIALS FOR WOMEN

Tran Quang Thong

Women constitute more than 50% of the population, undertake most of the work (two thirds) but only receive one tenth of the total income. Rural women's contribution to rice and cereals production is over 50% but few of them are trained in any kind of agricultural occupation. The working hours of women are longer than that of men, often 12-16 hours per day. In addition to their domestic responsibilities in child care, women have to be responsible for housework, such as fetching firewood, water and cooking and even hard work as ploughing and raking, planting, transplanting and harvesting. Women have to suffer from continuing under nutrition and two thirds of them are anemic. Rural women lack sex education and have poor health due to frequent pregnancies. The illiterate women especially lack knowledge on balanced diet, family planning, house cleaning and other information to improve health and the quality of life. They have lower status and low paid occupations, lower economic positions so they are less self-conscious and lack self-confidence. They have a few books and a little time to read so they can not appreciate the benefits of reading and have no motivation for reading.

Therefore, development of literacy learning material is aimed at the following contents:

- To affirm the role of women as a key producer, laborer, continually engaged in economic activities and important contributor to the income of the family.

- To enable women to perform successfully the role of wife and mother, to have needs for sharing the household chores between husband, wife and children, needs for recreation, needs for means of decreasing the hard work for women, and needs for services to help reduce the working hours for women in housework.

- The role of women in decision making in the family and their attitudes of women towards their main role.

- Enhancement of the equality between men and women, fundamental rights of women, economic status and position of women in family, society and community.

In short, development of literacy learning materials for women with limited reading skills to enhance their potentials, self-confidence and their role in the family and society, is a very necessary work to enable them easily to find the way to realize their dream and promote their strength.

I. METHODS IN DEVELOPING LITERACY LEARNING MATERIALS (LLMS) FOR WOMEN

To develop LLMs for women the following steps should be followed:

1. **Determine the target group of the learning materials**

   At present in Vietnam, the main target groups of the LLMs are poor rural women, with little schooling who are owners or main producers in the households and women in remote, mountainous, inaccessible and sea island areas and minority women. They have a low standard of living and have needs for literacy learning so as to gain functional skills which will enable them to raise their potentials, generate income, improve the quality of life and enhance the equalities between men and women.

2. **Determine the needs**

When determining the needs, national policies on women and community studies should be taken into consideration. When

conducting a survey of the community, the following problems should be paid attention to: the social, economic, cultural and health situation of the community; development needs of the community; resources and available services of the community; status, role and problems related to women development; and problems concerning women education and preliminary information on their reading and writing capacity.

To gather information on the needs of the target group, one of the following approaches can be used (or the combination of these):

- Field visit and observation to identify the needs.
- Interview (a set of questions is used to ask community leaders, each household or each learner).
- Local leaders make reports (about the economic, social, women and concerned target groups situation).
- Organize meetings, discussion, seminars.

Interviewers' groups should consist of women members so as to enable the women interviewers to easily express their opinions. Groups of interviewers should be accompanied by the elders of the community, heads of mountain village or local leaders who can assist them when necessary.

When assessing the needs it is necessary to answer the following questions:

- To what extent are these needs urgent?
- To what extent are they severe?
- How many women can these needs have effects on?
- The degree of adverse effects which will happen in the future if at present we do not do anything to solve these problems.

To identify the needs to be prioritized, "participatory approach" can be used in training workshops for developing learning materials for women. This entails drawing a map on problems and needs as well as a map on the solutions to these problems and the activities following those solutions. To undertake this activity, the following materials are needed:

big sheets of paper; small sheets of paper (at least twenty pieces for each one); adhesive tape or glue; a pen to write (at least from 3 colors on); and a pencil or ball-point pen for each person.

Participatory approach involves the following steps:

- All participants involved in the process of developing materials (field study, interviewing, attending training courses ...) are divided into groups of 7-10 persons.
- Each member of the group prepares to make a report on the information of needs and problems of the target group in about 20 minutes. After that each member gives a preliminary presentation to the group.
- Each member of the group writes about the needs and problems into ten (10) small sheets of paper. Each need (or problem) is written into a sheet of paper within 20 minutes. Each need (or problem) should be written as follows:
  - Using a simple language and short sentences;
  - With a clear and practical content;
  - Understandable to everybody.
- After writing, each member reads aloud what he/she wrote before other member of the groups. The others listen to him/her to classify according to the content area. All the members of the groups classify the small sheets of paper (made by each member) and stick them on a bigger sheet of paper.
- Each area is arranged like a fan (or a circle) and all the contents written in small sheets of papers are combined to

come up with a brief summary. The number of the sheets of paper for each area will be an indicator for reference in the determination of the needs (or problems) to be prioritized.

- The first map on needs (or problems) is completed. After that, use the same procedure to form a second map on the solutions for these priority needs or problems. Based on the map of solutions and national goals, a curriculum or a learning material for the target group is developed.

3. Selection of themes or topics

When selecting topics, developers must use priority needs and give these topics attractive titles so as to draw the attention of the learners and urge them to look at and read.

The topics can belong to any of the three following groups:

- The various roles of women;
- Techniques for generating income, management, services;
- Agricultural techniques, child caring methods.

4. Determine specific objectives

After selecting topics the objectives should be determined before writing the materials. The objectives should be based on the circumstances and needs of the target groups. Specific objectives will be the basis for the selection of contents and the ways of presenting contents and writing materials. The objectives should be selective and specific as too many objectives will make the focus of the contents diluted.

5. Selection of contents

Selection of contents should be based on and consistent with the objectives. Therefore the clearer the objectives defined the easier the selection of contents. Moreover, careful selection of contents will facilitate the writing of materials in the following stage.

To evaluate the relevance of the contents to be selected, the following questions can be used:

- Is sex stereo-typing avoided in the content?
- Is there a content of shared responsibilities between men and women?
- Are women described positively and with adequate number?
- Is the status of women enhanced?
- Are the rights of women affirmed?
- Are women stimulated to raise questions?

6. Selection of type and format

Format to be selected should be compatible with the objectives and contents and based on the actual situation of the target audiences, their concerns and their literacy level and skills.

Type and format of materials used to reflect the content can take the forms of booklets, leaflets, picture, slogans, cassette tape, video tapes, slide films, plastic films, game, and puppet shows. For each type, one of the following forms can be used: stories with various illustrations, questions and answers, folksongs, long poems, pictorial funny stories, poems, simple plays or the combination of these.

7. Developing outline and the first draft

When writing the first draft, it is necessary to determine the size of the reading material, number of pages, the length of the text, the number of words, size of word, size and type of illustration picture, language to be used, the balance between words, illustration pictures and the space in each page, relevance and attractiveness to learners.

When the objectives are clearly defined, contents and format are selected, outline and the first draft are developed, the problem of writing the text is not a difficult one.

However, it is necessary to pay attention to the presentation of stories so as to make it reasonable and realistic, its evolution and characters should be natural, the dialogue in the stories should conform to the surroundings of the users. After writing, the authors should use the above-mentioned criteria to evaluate whether the contents are appropriate to women's issues and problems.

8. Illustrations

Illustration preparation is a very necessary step in developing the learning materials for women with limited reading skills. Illustration makes the materials more attractive and it can draw the attention of the learners. It also helps to communicate an intended message to the user and makes the materials more understandable.

Therefore illustrations should be carefully prepared and conform to the surroundings of the target audience to ensure the attractiveness. They should not contradict the text and should supplement to the text.

9. Field testing

Field testing is a necessary step to revise and finalize the draft. When testing, the following questions can be used:

. Are the themes or topics related to the needs identified?

. Do the objectives selected satisfy the needs?

. Is the objective of enhancing the status of women attained?

. Do the contents cover all the objectives?

For illustrations, the following questions can be asked:

- Are they clear?
- Do they help the text?
- Are they appropriate to the literacy level of the learners?
- Do they supplement the texts?
- Are they attractive?

10. Finalize the draft

This is the last step before printing the materials and distributing them to the users.

II. SOME PRINCIPLES IN DEVELOPING THE LITERACY LEARNING MATERIALS FOR WOMEN

When developing literacy learning materials, the following principles should be paid attention to:

a. The principle of consistency

Objectives, contents and style of presentation should be consistent with each other.

Example 1: If the objective is to give information on a certain topic, then the content should consist of all necessary and relevant information concerning that topic. The presentation should take the form of a simple story so as to enable the learners to easily understand that information. The presentation should also be systematic.

Example 2: If the objective is the permeation of a certain attitude toward a special practice then the content should bring out the positive aspects of that practice or the negative effects if that practice is not realized. The content should be presented in a way that will not impose on the learners but should be indirect subtle and persuasive. The presentation should arouse emotion but not intellect. The content should be presented through a play or a plight of characters rather than an insipid story.

b. The principle of attractiveness

Style of presentation should be attractive, interesting and arousing. The contents should be presented in a way that will draw the attention of the target audiences. They look at the material, take it up, turn over the next page then begin to pay attention, read and continue to read to the last page.

c. The principle of appropriateness

The contents and style of presentation should be appropriate to the life style of the target audiences in terms of physical, economic, social, political aspects, cultural environment, level of skills, benefits and needs. The more the materials are appropriate to the learners the more they attract the learners.

d. The principle of promoting ability

This principle is aimed at helping this target group enhance their ability (that does not mean to promote and encourage women to take up arms or find ways to dominate men). Promoting and encouraging the learners to analyze their status and circumstances, raise questions and find out answers, think over and decide, actively promote their ability, have self-confidence to change and be the master of their life. Without ability women are less hopeful to improve their status and circumstances in society.

The objectives, contents and style of presentation should focus on the ability of women (illustrations of women should be best presented). Women should be described in a positive aspect, in their numerous roles. They should be described as those who dare to make decision and have authority. It is necessary to avoid sexism and sex stereotyping.

CONCLUSION

Developing learning materials for women with limited reading skills is a significant work. Because whatever we write affects the knowledge, skills, viewpoint, system of values, awareness and behavior of the target group. These, in their turn, affect the family life, community of women and the whole society. Therefore, if we are not careful in writing (for example: if we only describe women in passive, inherent, stereotyped role as the wife, house wife and mother), we will consolidate the cultural and social system that held back women in a low status. We should always be clear about the concept women in development and always keep in mind the following questions: Why do we write? (objective), What do we write? (content), and How do we write? (style of presentation).

Box 3.3 - **Choice of Words for Literacy Curriculum and Materials**
(discussion during the Regional Seminar)

Participant A: I want to say something about gender perspective. Listening to our group this afternoon, I realized that if one uses a generative approach in the identification of words that have been used in teaching literacy, it will automatically have a perspective that is necessary for its clientele. Therefore all these words, we assume will have meaning for the people. If the clientele are women then we will have some idea of the problems, of the way they think of themselves. If it is the youth or street-children, these perspectives will come up. In other words, I do not think we have to worry about gender perspective because if the model of the literacy program is generative as in Freire, automatically it will have the perspective of its clientele. And of course, it will be up to the catalyst to see, to understand whether this perspective needs transformation or modification because it is not yet as liberating as we say.

Participant B: I just wanted to say something about the generative approach. In the first primer that we have developed, we have chosen words like draught, famine and poverty. The primer turned out to be so heavy and dreary that the response of the learner is that we are trying to be politically correct, even if it is talking about key words that would link the people's problems in the area. I think that over the year, we have come to realize the importance of choosing key words that are also kind of fun and related to women's experiences. Not just with poverty, not just with minimum wages but also words that are celebrating women. And we also want to talk about friendship, all that links to other aspects of life as well.And even through these key words, you can talk about women's experiences, you can talk about gender issues, you can even talk about political issues. But I think we still need to be clear about what is rigid and narrow and dry choice of politically key words.

Participant A: But precisely this is my point. The choice of the words must be the choice of the clientele. Not the choice of the one who writes the modules. We were surprised for example, because we always believed that the most important word for the Filipino farmer is "lupa" (land) but this is not true as in some cases, they would say shoes. But one must be ready to take these things. The difference lies entirely in who chooses the word. Whose words are these? Ours or theirs?

ANALYSIS OF TOTAL LITERACY CAMPAIGN PRIMERS

Ila Patel

Curriculum research in adult education is a neglected area of inquiry among researchers in India and elsewhere. Unlike the extensive curriculum of formal education, the curriculum of adult literacy programs is very limited and fragmentary. Nevertheless, adult education is an integral part of the larger system of education in society and is conditioned by the existing context of society. Furthermore, curriculum of adult education is characterized by selectivity, involving choices of what to teach. This selective tradition of knowledge in turn highlights the ideological nature of adult literacy curriculum.

While research evidence on gender issues in adult literacy in India is incomplete, existing literature highlights how literacy primers reinforce patriarchal roles of women as wives and mothers, and ignores women's active participation in the economy. An analysis of seven literacy primers used by the government agencies and non-government organizations in North India by Bhasin (1984) showed that the content focused primarily on housework, child care and family planning. Patel (1986) in a detailed study of Gujarati literacy primers for women reveals the similar trend. She argued that despite lip service to "integrating" women in the development process, the primers ignored women's role as productive workers and active citizens, and focused exclusively on the domestic and reproductive spheres of women's lives.

Against the background of paucity of research on adult literacy curriculum from the feminist perspective, this paper focuses on the study of how gender ideology is articulated in literacy primers that are used in the government-sponsored Total Literacy Campaigns (TLC) in Gujarat. Discussion in this section in divided into three sections. The first section highlights the context of curriculum development for the Total Literacy Campaigns in Gujarat. General characterization of male and female characters is discussed in the second section. The third section examines the nature of gender ideology through a detailed analysis of the content of literacy primers and shows how the text marginalizes women's productive role and reinforces their domestic and reproductive roles.

The Context of Curriculum Development

How is the adult curriculum designed in the Total Literacy Campaigns in Gujarat? Who actually participates in the process of curriculum development? Before examining the content of adult literacy curriculum, it is important first to understand the context of curriculum development at the national and state levels.

In India, the central government defines the adult education policy and to a large extent, finances large-scale programs of adult education. It maintains hegemonic control over knowledge-production in adult education by financing State Resource Centres (SRCs) that produce literacy primers and other materials for illiterates and ensures that materials produced at the regional level is approved at the national level. The central government also articulates the general conceptual approach that stipulates the process of curriculum development, and national goals and values as espoused by the educational policy. By doing so, it maintains its control over the content of adult literacy curriculum.

Nevertheless literacy curriculum and materials are designed by local curriculum designers at the state-level on the basis of general guidelines and parameters set by the government at the national level. Development of teaching and learning materials at the state-level also enables local curriculum designers and the state to incorporate their world views. Thus, literacy primers contain explicitly ideology of the nation-state but at the same time also

constitute ideological orientations of local curriculum designers that often contradict the former.

The adult literacy curriculum of the TLCs has been shaped by the broader context of the program. It was the National Educational Policy (1986) that first emphasized promotion of adult literacy as an important area of national concern in order to prepare the literate labor force for the modernizing economy. The National Literacy Mission imparted a new sense of urgency in tackling the problem of eradication of illiteracy and provided impetus to the mass approach to literacy by mobilizing and harnessing all sections of society (Directorate of Education 1988). Apart from promoting literacy, the NLM also stressed linking adult education with national goals and inculcating the values of national integration, conservation of environment, observation of small family norms and promotion of women's equality.

Furthermore, to promote rapid learning of basic literacy skills, the NLM articulated the technocratic approach to literacy learning, known as the Improved Pace and Content of Learning (IPCL) and prepared a detailed guideline for designing literacy curriculum and materials in the TLCs (Directorate of Adult Education 1993). The major thrust of the technocratic approach to literacy learning remains on rote learning than acquisition of critical thinking and analysis. Hence, the programmatic focus of the NLM has remained on imparting cognitive literacy skills despite including functionality and awareness in the definition of adult education.

Sample Literacy Primers

In Gujarat, three literacy primers - Janchetana Vachanmara (1, 2 and 3) were prepared by the State Resource Center at Gujarat Vidyapeeth in standard Gujarati on the basis of the IPCL approach stipulated by the NLM. To develop locally relevant literacy primers, the Total Literacy Campaign gives some flexibility in developing the district-specific literacy primers in collaboration with local curriculum designers, women's groups and non-government organizations. However in Gujarat no locally-designed primers have been used in the TLCs. To continue the control of SRC over knowledge-production in literacy campaigns, the State Literacy Mission Authority of Gujarat stipulated the use of only SRC primers in TLCs. The SRC primers have been designed primarily by curriculum designers affiliated with Gujarat Vidyapeeth and other Gandhian non-government organizations. Thus, participation of progressive groups and non-governmental organizations in the process of curriculum development in Gujarat was minimum.

Each primer consists of several lessons and four literacy tests where each lesson can be broadly divided into three parts: visuals the main text, and exercises. The primary material for analysis consists of visuals in the beginning of each lesson, the main text of a lesson and an exercise for ending and writing comprehension towards the end of a lesson. The analysis in this section is based on 44 visuals, the main text of 35 lessons and 29 exercises.

In general, the content of literacy primers in Gujarat can be broadly divided into four areas, namely development, social issues, national integration, and equality (see Table 1). The major thrust of the literacy primers for total campaigns in Gujarat is on imparting development-oriented messages. Nearly three-fourths of lessons (26 of 35 lessons) are on development and though equality and national integration are stated as core values in the curriculum, each one of them are conveyed explicitly in only two and three lessons respectively. The content area of social issues has very limited coverage through four lessons only.

As the primers are designed for both, men and women, it is assumed that all the lessons in the primers address to both sexes. Although women are identified as an important target group in the Total Literacy Campaign and women's equality is stressed as one of the core values by the National Literacy Mission, women's issues are assigned low priority in the literacy primers. Only 6 out of 35 lessons (17%) specifically

deal with women's issues, such as equal wages, girl's education, dowry and age at marriage.

Profile of Characters

Representation of male and female characters in the primers appears somewhat equal. Among the characters in the primers, there are 151 males compared to 154 females while the text depicts more girls than boys.

Appearance of characters in the visuals and the text indicate that on the whole primers have portrayed rural characters where among 308 characters, 216 (70 percent) appear to be rural. Most often, neither visual portrayal of characters nor their characterization in the text gives us enough clues to assess their social class. Social class of only 101 characters can be identified mostly on the basis of landholdings, social status and occupational background described in the text and occasionally from appearance and dwellings in the visuals. Nevertheless, more characters appear to be "prosperous" (21 percent) than "poor" (12 percent). There is no significant difference in representation of the social class of male and female characters.

Similarly, limited cues are given in the primers to interpret cultural and religious background of characters. Although an attempt is made in visuals and the text of a few lessons to depict multi-religious community, Hindu characters dominate the primers. About 80 percent of characters in the primer can be identified as Hindus. Among non-Hindu characters, more male characters and more Muslim characters are shown. Except in one lesson (Lesson 1 in Primer 2) that depicts a tribal family, no attempt is made in the primers to portray ethnic minority groups other than religious minorities. If we define the ethnic style of dressing prevalent in rural areas and among specific cultural or religious groups as "traditional", then most characters in the visuals (86 percent) appears to be in "traditional" dress.

In general, educational background and marital status of most characters cannot be inferred. Among educated characters (14 in the visual and 20 in the text), there is slightly more females than males. On the other hand, the text have shown more married women characters than men.

In summary, general representation of demographic and socio- economic background of characters does not indicate a strong gender bias in characterization. However, further examination of the portrayal of principal characters in the primers reveal gender stereotypes.

Portrayal of Principal Characters

Principal characters are the protagonists through whom main messages are conveyed in each lesson. They can be identified from the visuals and the text of 32 lessons of the primers. In Gujarati literacy primers, women are not invisible as protagonists as the primer has at least made an attempt for positive portrayal of women through principal characters, who are shown as conveying information on 13 themes in the content areas of development, social issues and equality. While the visuals and the text give us limited information about the demographic and socio-economic background of protagonists, a cursory look at the main concerns and activities reveals gender stereotypes in the characterization.

The content area of development has received highest attention in Gujarati primers. Development-related themes are conveyed predominantly by male characters, who are depicted as knowledgeable, progressive and modern. Specifically, agriculture, cooperation and environment are exclusively the domain of male protagonists. Invisibility of women characters in these key development sectors gives us the impression that women are ignorant, traditional and lack new knowledge to play a role of a protagonists in these areas. Even when women are portrayed as protagonists in the development sector, conveying information on 9 sub-themes, their roles are restricted to conveying messages on "women-centered" topics, mostly in the areas of health and hygiene and girl's education. Thus, women

protagonists are perceived as knowledgeable only in areas that deal with their traditional role of caring and nurturing the family. Even in the content area of social issues, women protagonist discuss the topics, such as dowry and alcoholism, that relate to their marital and family life. On the other hand, role of men as protagonists is not restricted to production-oriented development sector. Men in the family (as a father or a son) are more frequently shown as informing and advising family members about issues such as marriage, sanitation, smokeless chulcha and dowry, than the other way around.

Further analysis of interaction patterns of male and female protagonists in the public and private spheres reveal subtle gender differences. Men protagonists advise and inform the community, involving both the sexes. In contrast, women protagonists mostly address a group of women (for example, mahila mandal, neoliterates in a literacy class, village women, etc.) in the public places.

Thus while the primers have at least made an attempt for positive portrayal of women through principal characters, they are however confined primarily to the areas, such as population control, health and hygiene and education, which are perceived predominantly the domain of women. Invisibility of women protagonists in productive sphere and in the larger community makes their role limiting. Although women protagonists are shown as interacting with men in public spaces and in the family, their role is restricted mostly to advising and informing women on the women-centered topics. Such characterizations of male and female protagonists reinforces the existing stereotypes that women are knowledgeable only in a limited range of subjects relating to women's lives and can only influence women.

Marginalizing Women's Productive Role

The primers used in the Total Literacy Campaigns show women characters as engaged in several economic activities. What is striking is not the invisibility of women's work, but overall marginality of their productive role where women's economic activities are often depicted as supplementary or secondary.

Despite women's active participation in agriculture in Gujarat, marginality of women is very striking in the lessons on agriculture. These lessons reinforce existing sexual division of work while making women's participation in farming secondary. Furthermore, visual representation of activities of men and women in the fields reflect prevalent sexual division of agricultural work. In general, men are shown as engaged in primary farming activities, such as ploughing, digging, spraying pesticides, driving a tractor, etc. while women are engaged in secondary agricultural activities, like picking vegetables and assisting in unloading the manure from the cart. On the other hand, except two lessons on agricultural labor that portray women as engaging in work and demanding wages, women's participation in agriculture is almost invisible in the text of these lessons. Not a single lesson on agriculture makes a reference to women as farmers or show them as participants in decision-making pertaining to agriculture. Exchange of agricultural information is primarily between male farmers. Thus, women as productive workers in agriculture remains more or less invisible in the primers.

In addition to agriculture, women are shown as engaged in income-generation activities in the lessons on cooperatives, labor, etc. Specifically, two lessons on the themes of self-employment (Lessons 2 and 11 in the Primer 2) reveal gender-bias in economic activities of male and female characters. For example, ambar charakha is proposed as a home-based economic activity, specifically for women to supplement family income. It is assumed that as women are home-bound they would use ambar charakha more frequently than men who mostly work outside the home. Advocacy of home-based income-generation for women also implies that activities of the domestic sphere are not disturbed. Such income-generation is not proposed for women as a full-time vocation, but as a leisure time activity for supplementing the family income. Thus

economic role of women is perceived to be a secondary to their domestic roles in the family. On the other hand, self employment through running a camel cart is proposed as an occupation for men only. The wife of the self-employed is not expected to independently take up employment, but play as supportive role in her husband's occupation.

In summary, despite lip service to integrate women in the development process and women's equality, the primers reinforce the existing gender division of labor in the economy and presents women's economic participation as marginal and secondary. Marginality of women's role as productive workers is further accentuated in the primers by emphasizing women's primary role as caretakers in the patriarchal family.

Dominance of Domestic and Reproductive Roles of Women

Invisibility of women's productive work represents only one side of the story. What is noticeable is the overall tendency in the primers to emphasize domestic and reproductive roles of women, while depicting them as passive recipients of information. Further analysis of the portrayal of men and women in the home environment and the content of lessons on health and hygiene, population and social issues shows how women's primary role as caretakers in the family emerges.

General representation of male and female characters in the home environment gives us an impression that there is no sex segregation within the household. While both men and women sit together and interact with each other, there is subtle role differentiation in their activities within the household. An analysis of 16 visuals in 11 lessons reveals sex stereotypes about gender roles.

Men are portrayed as decision makers in the home environment, advising female family members about age at marriage, benefits of ambar charakha for home-based income generation, benefits of a smokeless chulha, etc. Women's advisory role in the household, however, is restricted mostly to women characters in the areas of health and girls' education. On the other hand, domestic work appears to be exclusively women's domain. Men are not at all shown as engaged in any domestic work at home. It is the women characters who are shown as performing household work, such as watering a plant, sweeping the floor, tiding the bed, and decorating the house.

In the eight lessons dealing with health-related topics, such as personal hygiene and cleanliness, village sanitation, material and child care, home remedies, and smokeless chulha, women's role as a caretaker in the family is highlighted.

While the major thrust of these lessons is on increasing health awareness among learners, a closer look reveals how health and hygiene is defined primarily as the concern of women. For example, three lessons on personal hygiene and sanitation attempt to create general awareness about health and hygiene while emphasizing women's domestic role in household cleanliness.

Though one lesson mentions about the participation of young men in the community action for village sanitation, maintaining household cleanliness is advocated essentially as a woman's responsibility. On the other hand, two lessons deal directly with the topics of immunization and prenatal care. The text of both the lessons is centered around female characters, particularly mothers. It is assumed that mothers are ignorant about the benefits of child care and prenatal care. No serious efforts are made in the text of these lessons to show a father/husband actively participating in child care or prenatal care. Thus, child care and prenatal care emerges as the responsibilities of a mother only.

On the other hand, gender-bias is not explicit in the four lessons on population. Messages on population control are conveyed through both male and female protagonists. The text of two lessons in family planning emphasizes equal treatment of children from both sexes. Nevertheless, an active role of a wife in decision-making about family planning is not stressed.

Furthermore four lessons on social issues also center around the domestic sphere of

women's life. While discussing child marriage, dowry and alcoholism as social evils, these lessons implicitly underscore significance of marriage. Although the treatment of the topic and characterization of women differ in each lesson, in general, male characters are depicted as progressive social reformers, opposing the social practices of dowry and child marriage. Meanwhile women are portrayed as obedient, submissive and passive in their roles as daughters, wives and mothers. Even when an attempt is made in two lessons to show women as active and strong characters mobilizing women to protest against the social custom of dowry, there is no critical questioning of patriarchal norms and values that subordinate women in society. For example, dowry is simply perceived as a social evil that increases economic burden to a daughter's parents. Although women are shown as active protagonists spearheading the anti-dowry movements no effort is made to link the dowry problem with the broader structural reality of women's oppression. Similarly, the lesson on alcoholism depicts an alcoholic Hiras wife as a typical tolerant and self-sacrificing Hindu woman who suffers, but nurtures her family.

Thus, the primers focus on women's domestic life and their roles as caretakers in the family-caring, nurturing and nursing as a wife and a mother. In contrast men are depicted as decision makers in the family but are seldom shown as actively participating in domestic work or child care. Such stereotyped representation of gendered roles again reinforces patriarchal norms and values.

Conclusions

What is apparent from the foregoing analysis of literacy primers in Gujarat is that there has not been any significant change in the portrayal of gendered roles in society. Although the literacy primers are designed on the basis of guidelines provided by the national bureaucracy, the content of the primers hardly reflects serious concern about the core values of the National Literacy Mission, such as national integration, population control, environment, equality, etc. Concern for women's a equality is neither addressed adequately nor reflected in the text all throughout the primers.

On the whole, the primers do not display overtly sexist bias in characterization of men and women characters as there has been some attempt to show positive images of women as protagonists. However, by and large their role as protagonists is confined to their caring and nurturing tasks in the family while men are protagonists primarily for the themes related to various production-oriented development sectors, such as agriculture, income-generation, cooperative, self-employment, etc. In other words, concerns of women and men protagonists reflect stereotyped gendered roles in society.

Occasionally, women are shown as engaged in economic activities, but their economic participation is presented as supplementary or secondary. Neither are they shown as breadwinners nor are their economic roles emphasized. In general, the primers reinforce existing gender stereotypes about economic roles while superficially advocating gender equality. In fact, marginality of women's productive role is further justified by the idealization of their domestic and reproductive role as wives and mothers. Women's roles and responsibilities revolve primarily around their role as caretakers in the family, while men continue their authority as decision-makers within the family. Such stereotyped depiction of women and men in literacy primers perpetuates patriarchal ideology and prevents them from developing critical understanding of gender issues.

Table 3.1 - Content of TLC Literacy Primers in Gujarat

Content Areas and Themes	Primer Level I	II	III	Total No. of Lessons
A. Development	**9**	**10**	**7**	**26**
Agriculture	5	1	1	7
Health	1	5	2	8
Population	1	1	2	4
Education	1	1	1	3
Income Generation	-	2	-	2
Cooperation	-	-	1	1
Environment	1	-	-	1
B. Social Issues	**2**	**-**	**2**	**4**
Dowry	1	-	1	2
Age at Marriage	1	-	-	1
Alcoholism	-	-	1	1
C. National Integration	**-**	**2**	**1**	**3**
Equality of all Religions	-	1	-	1
Equality of all Citizens	-	-	1	1
Voting	-	1	-	1
D. Equality	**2**	**-**	**-**	**2**
Equal Wages a	1	-	-	1
Social Equality	1	-	-	1
Total	13	12	10	35

Box 3.4 - **INCORPORATING HEALTH EDUCATION IN LITERACY EFFORTS**

Suddha Sundaraman

Health and sanitation is a vast area that lies very close to women's needs and interests. Unfortunately, government approach to health has been overwhelmingly dominated by Family Planning strategies, and imperfect delivery systems. The approach to health adopted in Post-Literacy districts is holistic in nature where there is a conscious emphasis on the preventive aspects of health care.

The series of easily readable, well illustrated booklets that have been brought out have been received extremely well by both literacy and health activists. They cover a wide range of topics, starting from common colds, coughs, water borne diseases, usage of protected drinking water, toilets and so on. Seven booklets concentrate on women's issues with a different treatment.

For instance, One Magical Morning, based on the original story line by Katha (a short story series), is a telling tale of the Sarpanch realizing the importance of prenatal and ante-natal care for women - after he becomes pregnant through a playful god's boon! It also takes a position against the biases regarding the sex of the child.

Similarly, Women's Health and Women's Rights, Of Darkness and Light, are booklets which not only give factual information on various aspects of women's health, but also link up health status to social status, and the negative effects of gender discrimination. They deal with things like early age of marriage, improper nutrition, excess workload, and other such factors which do not normally fall into a health perspective at all.

In the same way, the books on women's specific problems - Knowing Our Body, Mysteries Of Adolescence, We Can Choose - have been designed to give women a total concept of their body and its functions. This includes, but is not restricted to, the significant area of reproductive functions. The right to information which should be (but never is) present in the choices placed before the couple for planning the family is taken cared of with simple diagrams and full details regarding the use of various kinds of contraceptives. Sterilization is also discussed. Thus, this set of books facilitates an overall understanding of health.

Although women initially found such discussion embarrassing, subsequently their hesitation disappeared and women have been taking these booklets into remote areas and using them for discussions. They have found out that women easily relate to these booklets and in fact, there have been kalajathas (street plays) organized around issues raised.

Another major strategy for popularizing these booklets is to undertake a village level health survey and draw up a participatory action plan with the local people. The information in the booklets is used to analyze the situation and draw up the action plan. In the process the information is related to their immediate situation and adapted to their needs. This revised adapted message is then converted into a set of handmade posters and used for further health education.

THE CONTENT OF FUNCTIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN LITERACY PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN IN VIETNAM

Thai Xuan Dao, Bui Van Thu

It is the right time to discuss and agree upon a literacy programme and contents for women alone because of a number of reasons.

Women constituted and are constituting the majority (70%) of the current total number of illiterate people in the whole country and most of them live in the rural, mountainous and remote areas (89%). Due to many difficulties and constraints in terms of psychological and socio-economic aspects the proportion of women in literacy classes is still low. The mobilization of women to go to literacy classes is not only propaganda, or providing of material incentives such as books, pens, money, and rice. For us, the education branch should improve the content of curriculum so as to make it appropriate to the target group which means diversification of literacy programme. Functional knowledge must be presented in a rich and attractive content and form. Gender roles, needs and circumstances of women should especially be paid attention to. Because, in the last analysis, illiteracy eradication at present is in fact a problem of, illiteracy eradication for women and girl children.

The current literacy programme is designed for all target groups in every area of the whole country. To a certain extent, it has provided women with necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to perform their traditional roles and functions in the family and society. However, many problems concerning women, and the new problems of peasant women in the renovated economy of the rural areas at present, especially in the context of "Women and development" have not been dealt with or clearly reflected.

Today women are equal to men in socio-economic and cultural activities but, women are still and will be women for ever. They are the mothers, wives and housewives. Women have their own needs, problems, difficulties and concerns. Therefore, equality does not mean the same in everything or the negation of gender differences.

One of the prerequisites to ensure the success of every adult education programme including literacy programme is that the content should be diversified, rich, flexible and appropriate to the target groups.

Therefore since 1992 the Research Center for Adult Education has conducted a new experimental literacy programme with focus on the gender roles and characteristics of women with the hope that it will be more appropriate and attractive to women especially in the rural areas.

Recently, the inappropriateness of the current literacy programme was recognized by UNESCO/PROAP so we tried to modify the literacy programme of APPEAL (Asia Pacific Programme of Education for All) so as to make it more appropriate to women and their gender characteristics.

I. Description of the process of developing a literacy programme for women.

The objective of designing an experimental literacy programme for women is to diversify the current literacy programme and make it more appropriate to different target groups including women. As any programme designed for any target group, it should ensure and closely follow the national criteria on literacy, literacy and numeracy skills. In this case, the main target audience is rural women because they constitute the majority of the total number of illiterates at present.

The following principles should be observed in the process of developing the literacy programme.

- The principle of appropriateness. The programme should be appropriate both to the objective demands of the socio-economic development of the nation and community and needs of women.

- The principle of development. The level of skills of literacy (reading and writing) and numeracy (calculating) should be gradually raised in terms of their complicatedness and difficulties. The functional knowledge should be developed, and gradually widened through each cycle and level.

- The principle of linkage. The linkage between skills of literacy and lesson levels should be ensured. Among those, the results attained in literacy and numeracy should be seen as the basic result, and functional knowledge is a means to stimulate the learners.

- The principle of participation. According to this principle, the learners will be the center of the learning process and therefore encourages the initiative and active participation of the women through a system of questions for discussion.

In planning for a literacy programme, the following steps should be carried out:

1) Conduct survey to know the needs;
2) Study the current literacy programme and current literacy materials for learners;
3) Define goals and objectives of the programme;
4) Identify area of functional contents and topics;
5) Develop curriculum and revision;
6) Modify and readjust.

The objectives of the literacy programme for women are based on the analysis of the needs of women, community and the country. In this case, like the national literacy programme, the literacy programme for women should attain the following objectives:

► To improve the literacy (reading, writing) and numeracy (calculating) skills according to the national criteria; and

► To provide minimum knowledge and skills necessary for women to perform successfully their role in the family and society (as a mother, wife, citizen and productive worker).

In addition, the literacy programme for women also has a special objective to empower women and that means to help them enhance their capacity and consolidate their belief in the role and potentiality of women in general and of themselves in particular, and belief in the ability to take part side by side with men in the development of the community for the improvement of the current living condition.

II. Identification of areas of functional contents and educational topics for women

The functional contents in the literacy programme are minimum knowledge and skills most necessary for women to perform their role and functions in production, family and society. Literacy and numeracy skills are both key objectives and a content of functional knowledge necessary for illiterate women.

However, the functional content is only a means to make the programme realistic and attractive to women and gender characteristic purposeful.

The basis for selecting the contents are:

- Objective needs of the socio-economic development of the community and nation for women.

- Needs and concerns, condition and circumstances of women.

- National programme.

- Reference of experiences of other countries

So for example, most of illiterate women (over 80%) according to the data analysis are poor people. Their main and immediate concern is how to have adequate food. If they can receive education they will hope to

generate income by means of their literacy skills. Therefore, one of the important functional content is to help women promote production and generate income.

Consequently, the topics of this content area should be supplemented and readjusted to make it relevant to the current needs of rural women and updated problems in agricultural production.

At present, agricultural production, especially household based economy have posed new requirements for women where they should be dynamic, creative, have self-control and have information not only on new technology of production but also knowledge on management, organization, business and market prices. Quite different from the past, the rural women today must be responsible for all the steps of the production process, from means of production, kinds of animals and vegetables, plants, cultivation and breeding techniques, to the problem of harvesting and selling products.

Therefore topics in the area of production and income should be based on the above mentioned requirements.

Furthermore, women have to perform their lofty functions i.e. to be mother and wife in the family. However, the illiterate women due to incomplete schooling, lack of information - meet with many difficulties in bringing up children and taking care of the family. Because they lack information on environmental hygiene, food hygiene and nutrition, women also meet with difficulties in the organization and management of the family.

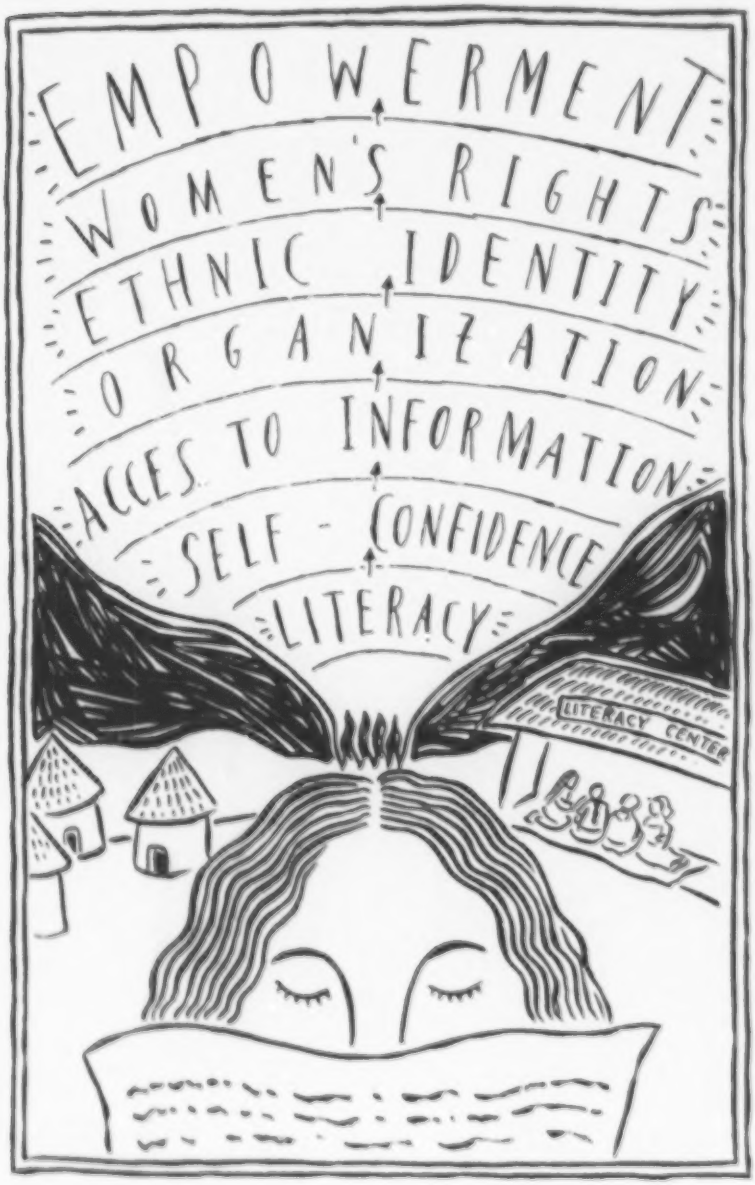
Therefore, an important and indispensable content area for women (like in the national programme) is the area of family life and health. However, in this area, some topics like common diseases of women, hygiene, diet and recreation of women, should be added.

The functional content for women is important as it must contribute to the empowerment of women. Realities show that the illiterate women are limited in capacity and as a result feel less self-confident.

It is therefore necessary to make them aware of their role, status and contribution in the family and society. And then they can promote their potentiality in every area of the life and actively participate in the development of the community and nation. Hence a new area of functional content needs to be included into a literacy programme which we call "Women in Development".

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATING AND ASSESSING LITERACY PRACTICES



THE IMPACT OF LITERACY ON WOMEN IN INDIA

Anita Dighe

A question of great interest and relevance to literacy practitioners, policy makers, planners and researchers relates to **the impact of literacy on women's lives.** In recent years, World Bank has been promoting basic education of women and girls on the basis of research evidence to show that women's education is negatively correlated with fertility rate and with infant and maternal mortality. Public investment in women's education is thus increasingly justified on the grounds that there is substantial evidence from a wide range of countries that increased female education is linked to improved health, lower fertility, and other benefits, and that investment in female education has a high social rate of return.

Researchers, however, have differed in their interpretation of these associations. Thus, it has been suggested that the association with illiteracy is indirect and that there are other factors that are responsible. For example, it has been suggested that lower fertility in countries with high literacy rate is not so much a consequence of literacy as such as it is of wider availability of schooling and hence the tendency for girls to marry later (UNESCO 1993). In any case, as pointed out by Bown (1990), most research cited internationally as proofs of a connection between women's education and such phenomena as lower infant mortality rates and small family size are actually based on school statistics rather than literacy data and while such a statistic is useful in the argument for promoting education of girls, the fact remains that very little is known about the outcomes of literacy for adult women. She therefore undertook a study on this almost un-researched subject of the impact of adult women's literacy by studying the outcomes of 43 project case studies and one country case study (Nepal) funded by Action Aid and ODA. On the basis of the analysis of the case studies, she found that certain social, economic and personal changes could be noticed among those women who had become literate.

As the above review has highlighted, **there is an overall paucity of research on women and literacy.** It was in order to begin to understand some of the issues raised above that a research study was undertaken in 1993 in Ambedkernagar, a resettlement colony in South Delhi where a Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) had been launched by Delhi Saksharta Samiti in 1991-1992, with the intention of it being a pilot project for undertaking a literacy campaign on a larger scale in Metropolitan Delhi.

Women's Literacy - What do women say?

What is presented in the following sections are the highlights from this research study where one hundred women who had supposedly completed the three literacy primers, were selected for the study. While a questionnaire was designed for the purpose, there were a large number of open-ended questions for obtaining qualitative insights on women's views and perceptions on various issues. In addition, more focused and in-depth interviews were conducted with 5 women respondents.

- The analysis revealed that one-third of the respondents had been to school earlier and had studied up to various levels in the formal system.

- Of the 34 respondents who had been to school earlier, only 4 were still school-going. The rest could be regarded as school drop-outs.

- These women had dropped out of school for various reasons. Some of them had left their studies because their mothers saw no need to educate their daughters. Others had to leave because of household

work and responsibilities. Fathers who died caused their daughters to assume greater family burden. Early marriage ensured withdrawal from school for others.

- Almost all of them, however, were keen on continuing with their education. That was probably the reason why they had joined the literacy campaign in the first place.

Motivation for Literacy

Interestingly, most women did not need to be motivated by others to participate in the literacy campaign. Said Asha, a 45 year old woman who was non-literate earlier, "I thought when everybody is studying, even I should start studying and be a part of the literacy campaign". According to Krishna Devi who was also a non-literate earlier, "I thought if I become literate, I'll be able to calculate and thus help my husband in business". Meera, a 35 year old married woman who had studied up to class 5 earlier, joined the campaign because she wanted to improve her reading and writing skills so that she could teach others. Sita Kumari, a 11 year old girl who is studying in class 6, joined the literacy classes because a lot of girls from her area were attending the classes and she felt she would learn "more" through the literacy classes and thereby improve her performance in school.

The reasons for joining the literacy campaign were thus varied. But the expectations were also different. Thus, some wanted to learn just enough literacy to be able to sign their names, or read bus numbers. Others thought if they could "learn a little", it would be to their advantage. Still others felt constrained by their inability to keep accounts. Their expectations were then to acquire appropriate skills that would help them to keep proper accounts. Inability to teach their children and monitor their homework, was yet another reason for some. There were, however, women who felt the need to acquire literacy skills for such private reasons as ability to read and write letters, even books. They were also of the opinion that acquisition of literacy skills would enable them to seek employment.

A related question was the kinds of problems they had earlier faced due to illiteracy. It appeared from their responses that illiteracy had constrained their ability to deal effectively with day to day problems.

These included:

- using the public transport system effectively,
- keeping proper accounts,
- reading and writing letters on their own,
- dealing with written communication in an autonomous manner,
- suffering the indignity of having to put their thumb impression,
- feeling harassed when going out on their own.

Acquisition of literacy skills was therefore perceived to be important in order to enable them to became independent, function autonomously and deal with everyday issues in an efficient manner. Literacy skills were also perceived to be important for seeking employment or even for engaging in petty business. Some were of the opinion that as literate mothers they would be able to teach their children.

Responses to Literacy Classes

All of them wanted to go to the literacy class to study for personal and social reasons. Thus, a large number liked to go to the literacy class because it gave them an opportunity to meet others and study collectively. Besides providing them an opportunity for social interaction, there were others who felt that by coming to the literacy class, they were able to "kill time". But more importantly, women had a personal reason for coming to literacy classes and this was their strong desire for learning.

Despite this high level of motivation, did they have any problems in going literacy classes? Interestingly, the problems were of a personal nature and it is worth considering

the reasons given by women for these might well provide a clue as to why women drop out of literacy classes in a large numbers. Thus there were women who complained about headaches and pain in the eyes and others who said they had overall "problems in understanding" as well as problems in deciphering the letters and the "matras". While some of these reasons are a comment on the poor health status of women that has a bearing on their learning abilities, the other reasons are a reflection of the poor self-image most women have and of the manner in which they have internalized their subordination so that they regard their learning disabilities as natural and normal.

Literacy Attainment and Uses of Literacy

A literacy test was designed, based on the norms set down by NLM (Directorate of Adult Education 1992):

From Table 4.1, it is clear that despite the fact that it was reported that all the respondents had completed the three TLC primers, **only 16% of the respondents were able to reach the NLM norm.** The score of more than 50% of the respondents was less than 30. It is possible that the reason for the low scores on the literacy test was due to the fact that the test came at the end of administration of the questionnaire by which time exhaustion may have probably set in for the respondents. A fairly large number evinced lack of interest in taking the test and seemed eager to finish it as quickly as possible. Furthermore, the literacy classes had closed down by October 1992 and the literacy test for the present study was administered about eight months later. It is possible that due to passage of time and lack of sustained post-literacy interventions, a sizable number had already relapsed into illiteracy.

Table 4.1 - Literacy Scores of Respondents

Total Scores	Per Cent
0 - 30	54
31 - 50	14
51 - 69	16
70 - 100	16
All	100

An attempt was also made to ascertain the extent to which literacy skills that had been acquired were put to daily use by the respondents. Simple questions relating to application of reading, writing, and numeracy skills in their everyday life, were asked. The questions varied in their level of complexity. Thus, at one end were simple questions that asked whether they could read names of TV programmes, names of shops, brand names of items purchased, to whether they could read big newspaper, headlines, or letters that were received or children's or any other book. With regard to writing skills, the questions that were asked varied from signing their own names, writing their own addresses, to writing letters, filling money order forms, writing an application, writing a cheque. Likewise for application of numeracy skills, the questions varied from reading time, reading the bus numbers, to reading the ration bill, to working out addition and subtraction on paper, as well as working out rate of interest. Each of the items was given weights on the basis of the level of complexity.

Table 4.2 - Scores for Application

NUMERACY SKILLS		READING SKILLS		WRITING SKILLS	
<=6	38%	<=5	56%	<=6	89%
7-12	29%	6-10	8%	7-12	10%
13-18	33%	11-15	36%	13-18	1%
All	100%	All	100%	All	100%

It appears from Table 4.2 that **the respondents, by and large, did not use the reading, writing and numeracy skills in their everyday life.** This appears to be so large in the case of application of writing skills. On the whole, it was the numeracy skills that seemed to be used more frequently. It is possible that the questions that were asked of the respondents were not relevant in the case of most women (for example, why would poor women be required to read or fill in money order forms or to fill in a cheque?) But since the NLM has set down norms that are applicable to both men and women, it became incumbent to design a literacy test on the basis of the NLM norms, as well as to ascertain from women about the extent to which they used the literacy skills that were acquired by them in their everyday life.

An attempt was made to correlate the literacy scores with the scores for application of reading, writing and numeracy skills in order to ascertain whether the level of performance of the learners affected their utilization of these skills. For this purpose, the chi-square test was used. This showed that there was a strong association between each of these variables, meaning that **those with higher literacy scores were more likely to apply their reading, writing and numeracy skills in their everyday life as compared to those with low literacy scores.** Likewise, the educational background of the learners also affected their performance level. Thus, those who were non-literate did not perform as well in comparison with those who were school drop-outs and school going.

The women learners in the present study comprised a heterogeneous group in terms of reading and writing skills. Besides their varying educational background, their overall performance levels also varied. Given this diversity, it was felt that rather than ascertaining their performance only on the basis of a literacy test, it would be pertinent to find out if they had experienced any changes or "gains" as a result of their participation in the literacy classes. The relevant questions then were, "Had literacy brought about any changes in their lives?" "Where any changes perceived at the personal level, at the family level"? Interestingly, this question did not evoke a positive response in the case of a large number of women. But when they were probed, it was apparent that some changes were perceptible.

IMPACT OF THE LITERACY EXPERIENCE ON WOMEN'S LIVES

Many women felt they had become "knowledgeable, more understanding" through literacy. There were others who had experienced more self-confidence. Said Krisha Devi, a 30 year old married woman with 5 children, "I'm now able to manage our business even if my husband is not around. I am able to help the children with their homework". According to her, a literate woman can manage better because "she is more confident and nobody can cheat her".

Asked about any changes in her relationship with her husband, she had this to say, "Men always try to assert their authority. My husband used to say earlier, 'you don't know anything' but he behaves somewhat respectfully now because I talk back". Her neighbors also confirmed that after joining the literacy campaign, Krishna Devi had become more confident and outspoken.

Wala Devi acknowledged that even though she attended the literacy classes for just one month, she felt she "could understand things better and could communicate better". For her a literate person was one who was more confident, discerning, and one who could manage things on her/his own as opposed to an non-literate person who she felt was often ill-treated.

Meera was a school drop-out and yet her participation in the literacy class had "made her feel good and had enabled her to articulate better". She is fond of reading books during leisure time but due to her participation in the campaign, she now feels confident she will be able to teach others. As a school-going girl, Sita Kumari felt her participation in the campaign had improved her articulation and honed her reading and writing skills.

On the whole, however acquisition of literacy skills did not seem to have altered or improved women's status within the family. For the perception of a majority of them was that there were no visible changes in their relationship with their husbands, children, parents. Some of them, however, did comment that their husbands and children were encouraging and approving of their efforts.

Desire for Post Literacy and Continuing Education

If the desire for basic literacy was strong enough, that for continuing education was no less strong. For **a majority affirmed that they wanted to continue with their education.** There were those who wished they could put their literacy skills to functional use (such as read newspapers, write letters independently, teach children etc.), but there were others who had aspirations to seek employment and those who wanted "to be somebody in life". Of the less than one fourth of the respondents who did not wish to continue, the reasons advanced were lack of time due to household chores, preoccupation with children, lack of interest in future studies and inability to continue due to ill health, advancing age, poor eyesight etc.

Of the majority who wanted to study further, **not all of them wanted to pursue their learning for any instrumental goal.** Interestingly about one third wanted to pursue learning as an end in itself. But an equal proportion expressed a hope and a desire to be able to find a job, including a fairly large number who specifically mentioned acquisition of a technical skill (such as tailoring). That the literacy programmes had raised the aspirations of the learners was evident from such statements as "I'd like to be a doctor," "I'd like to be madam", "I'd like to do a course", "I'd like to do business". Participation in the literacy campaign had also kindled the instinct for social service in some who said they would like to teach others.

There was, however, **inadequate articulation about the type of post literacy and continuing education programmes the respondents wanted.** While a need was expressed for tailoring (presumably due to lack of exposure to any other vocational skill women could aspire for), the fact that women were articulating such a wish underscores the importance of planning for providing various types of vocational/technical programmes as part of continuing education. While respondents were of the opinion that opportunities for continuing education should be provided, they were unclear as to what kinds of programmes they would have preferences for.

One of the constituent NGOs that formed the **Delhi Saksharta Samiti**, (Delhi Literacy Committee) ran a library service for children. Under the aegis of this organization, arrangements were made to provide library services in some parts of Ambedkarmagar.

Even though the books provided were for children, an attempt was made to ascertain if the women knew about the library service and if so, did they use the service. Only three respondents were aware of this service. The rest were either unaware, or said they had no time or else felt they still lacked adequate reading skills for independent reading. If they borrowed books from anyone, these were mainly children's books or some story books and in case of difficulty in reading, they sought the help of children in the family, or their husbands or relatives, or the literacy volunteers. The analysis showed that the reading habit was still not strongly inculcated among the women and that their reading skills were limited and as a result, they required guidance/supervision from others.

Interpreting the Findings

The results of this study have corroborated the findings of other studies which have shown that **women's motivation for literacy is very high.** The fact that women participate in large numbers in the TLCs can be explained by the high motivational levels for the literacy campaign. There is also another reason and this relates to the "social sanction" that is obtained for women's participation due to large-scale mobilization that is attempted by the campaign. Women are the winners, for various patriarchal considerations that hinder their participation become at least temporarily inoperative as they come out of their homes and take part in the campaign with great enthusiasm. But they also come with varying expectations from the literacy campaign. As this study showed, the reasons for joining the literacy classes varied, so also their expectations. It is worth noting, however, **the importance of contextual factors that determine women's need for literacy.** Living in a congested resettlement colony in a metropolitan city such as Delhi, acquisition of literacy classes becomes important in order to enable them to become independent, and function autonomously. Thus for example, the inability to keep written accounts or write occasional letters and deal with written communication independently, become the very reasons for their joining the literacy classes. Considering the generally low educational attainment of their school-going children and the poor quality of education that is provided by government schools, mothers of school-going children also feel the need to become literate in order to help the children with their studies or at least monitor what is being taught in schools. With deepening economic crisis as well as the realization that very many types of employment are no longer accessible to the non-literates, there is also the expectation that acquisition of literacy skills would enable them to seek employment or at least engage in petty business.

In other words, **the reasons given by women for joining literacy classes are conditioned by the socio-economic milieu in which they live.** In order to understand what are the factors that influence women's decision to join literacy classes, it would be worthwhile undertaking more extensive work in varied situations - most importantly in rural areas. Such studies would be important in order to see whether the type of literacy and post-literacy programmes that are offered at least match some of the expectations for which women join literacy classes.

Besides their high level of motivation, **women also generally liked to attend the literacy classes for personal and social reasons.** Thus a large number liked to go to the literacy classes because it gave them an opportunity to meet others and to study collectively. This social dimension of literacy has been commented upon earlier (Horsman 1988; Dighe 1992). For according to them, literacy classes provide an opportunity to large numbers of women to break the isolation which is socially structured into their lives, giving them a chance to meet other women, and learn collectively - rather than learn singly as individuals. Even the fact that some came to literacy classes to "kill time", is an aspect of social isolation that makes time hang heavily on the hands of some women. What came across unambiguously in this study, however, was women's strong desire for learning.

If women joined literacy classes for personal and social reasons, **it was largely the personal factors that were responsible for their irregular attendance or for their discontinuance.** A comment has been made earlier on the poor health status of women that has a bearing on their learning abilities. It is, however, also a fact that older women in their forties and fifties are constrained due to lack of reading glasses. But more importantly, it is the internalization of their subordination that results in their beginning to feel they are useless and worthless learners - more so because they regard their learning disabilities as natural and normal.

This has implications for the organization of literacy classes for women. For **in order to overcome this attitude which epitomizes the attitude of most poor women towards literacy, the learning process must enable women to be themselves, to be valued the way they are, to experience personhood, to move from a feeling of worthlessness to a feeling of self-worth.** It also indicates that the ambiance of a literacy class must be such that women feel comfortable, relaxed and do not experience anxieties. Since women lack a social space they can call their own, literacy classes must provide them that space. For experience is showing that programmes that provide women the social space to be away from their homes, to be relaxed, to talk to others, to seek help from others, enhance and sustain women's learning.

Experience to date has also shown that **teaching methods play an important role in literacy participation and for sustaining motivation among women** in general. Thus a superior and patronizing teaching attitude discourages interest while a democratic, open and involved relationship - treating women as equal - and creating an atmosphere of confidence, has been found to have a positive influence on attendance and results (Lind 1988). The experience of some of the voluntary organizations have been particularly significant in this regard. For their experience has clearly shown how the attitudes of the volunteers as well as participatory processes of learning that encourage and elicit women's participation, can create the right condition for sustaining women's participation. While research evidence is fragmentary, experience has shown that the process of teaching is very critical insofar as women learners are concerned as approach that elicits learner participation, the use of folk songs and literacy games breaks the monotony and repetitiveness of learning and makes learning more enjoyable and literacy acquisition less daunting.

The present study showed that **the literacy volunteers felt more comfortable in using the formal methods of teaching.** Even discussions on the themes of the literacy primers were minimal. In other words, the main emphasis remained on imparting technical skills of reading, writing, and numeracy skills to the learners. Writing tasks on the blackboard, notebooks and slates were frequently reported. While it was intended that the key word or sentence in the literacy primer would trigger a discussion and thereby gradually raise the awareness of the learners, in reality this did not happen. This was because the translation of a theme (expressed in words/sentence) into sustained dialogue, requires skills that the literacy volunteers did not have. Also, because most of the literacy volunteers were school students, their youth and relative inexperience in life, also militated against the use of such non-traditional methods of teaching. Any participatory, dialogical interactions between the learners and the literacy volunteers would require sustained and on-going training support of a different kind.

The importance of participatory processes of learning becomes evident when an attempt is made to ascertain the impact of literacy on women's lives. The present study showed that for those who participated, the literacy campaign did seem to bring about some changes at the personal level. Thus, some reported more self-confidence, better articulation, better discerning ability, more self-respect, and ability to manage on one's own. On the whole, however, their participation did not seem to have altered or improved their status within the family except for a few women who felt their

husbands now treated them with some respect. The gains were limited because the teaching-learning process did not encourage experience-sharing among women--women talking about themselves, their problems, their needs - deciding collectively and taking action to ameliorate their present condition. This process of critical analysis and reflection leading to collective action is so crucial if women have to be empowered at the individual and collective levels. When empowerment indicators were used to assess the impact of literacy on women's lives, it became evident that while literacy *per se* had initiated the process of empowerment at the personal, individual level, and to that extent the direction of change was in the positive direction, this change needed to be sustained and consolidated. Furthermore, attempts would now have to be consciously made to ensure that individual empowerment leads to collective empowerment of women and vice versa.

A significant finding of this study relates to the level of literacy reached by women. While the level of literacy reached by women was low by the NLM norms, it is interesting to note that this finding conforms with the African experience (Lind 1992) according to which women take much longer to become functionally literate. Also, women tend to use their literacy skills less frequently (Carron et al 1988). A recent study undertaken by Stromquist (1994) in Sao Paulo in Brazil has shown the variable levels of literacy acquired by women over a three year longitudinal study and has also pointed out that women do read and write in their daily lives but in small and infrequent amounts, patterns that would hardly support the development of literacy habits. This experience has also been corroborated by the present study. For women tend to use their numeracy skills more often and their writing skills less frequently.

These findings have implications insofar as TLC are concerned. **Since TLCs are time-bound and target-oriented, their single-most preoccupation with** literacy attainment would undoubtedly conceal the variable levels of literacy attained by women. According to Brown (1992), **literacy is not a single unified competence nor a fixed measurable achievement. There is hierarchy of literacies and a learner can progress in skillfulness from one level to the next.** While the three IPCL primers might serve such a purpose to some extent, it becomes crucial that in the case of women the literacy skills that are acquired, are consolidated and strengthened so as to prevent their relapse into illiteracy. Maybe women need to be involved in designing their own literacy materials. Experiences are now beginning to show that the stories told by learners become effective learning materials for the learners find these stories interesting when they see their own struggles and experiences reflected. Because language or even the dialect of the learner is used in the stories, women find them easy to read. But it is not enough for women learners to accept such experience stories uncritically. If literacy has to empower women then clearly experience is the crucial point from which to make a beginning. But women must also learn to develop a critical attitude by questioning their experience as well as the rationale behind them.

The different literacy levels reached by women also has implications for developing an appropriate Post-Literacy programme for women. For **rather than perceiving Post-Literacy as a phase that is distinct from the basic literacy phase, in the case of women, it is necessary to consolidate the literacy skills at each of the three levels by developing appropriate literacy materials,** some of which could be along the lines suggested above. Also, given women's lack of confidence in being able to read books on their own (as in library/Jana Shikshan Nilayam), it would be desirable that reading habits are gradually inculcated in say "read aloud" sessions. But more importantly, if the basic literacy phase in the TLCs only focused on imparting literacy skills, it would become incumbent that in the next phase, the focus shifts to group building and group action. In other words, conscious educational interventions would have to be made to empower women. Various skills training programmes would have to be organized in

response to their felt need for continuing education.

As the present study has shown, the overall gains of the literacy campaign were modest in terms of the literacy levels reached by women if the NLM norms for a literate person, are used. Likewise, it was found that qualitatively modest gains were made with regard to empowerment indicators. And yet the literacy campaign had kindled the desire in women to become literate and to continue with their education. **Benefits from literacy in the form of increased self-esteem and autonomy, however, were considerable.** It seems that women find important social spaces in literacy classes.

As in the study mentioned earlier (Stromquist 1994), in this study too, it was found that unintentionally, literacy classes offer women an opportunity to meet a group of women with similar constraints and often, wit similar experiences of poverty and subordination. Literacy classes provide women with a space to which they can get away from home, it is probably the first time that they can see on a collective scale that their personal situations are not unique.

Where do we go from here?

The present study was undertaken on the basis of a small sample and to that extent, the findings of the study cannot be generalized. Also, the study was undertaken in one re-settlement colony of Delhi and is not representative of the rural experience at all. And yet, the study is probably one of the first attempts to pay serious attention to women's literacy. The study has attempted to provide answers to questions such as (1) what are women's needs for becoming literate? (2) what are their expectations from literacy? (iii) what are their expectations for continuing education? (iv) what is the impact of literacy on their lives?

While the study has made a modest beginning to answer some of these questions that have policy implications, **it is recommended that systematic and concerted work in this direction is undertaken in future through multi-site action research studies in varying linguistic and socio-economic settings.** The present study attempted to supplement quantitative with qualitative data obtained through open- ended questions and in-depth interviews with a small number of respondents. This experience showed that **more emphases on qualitative methods** would have provided better and more meaningful insights relating to women's literacy. In future, special attention could be paid to methodological issues, particularly to various qualitative approaches that would enable the researchers to get "inside" the experience of women and hear and capture their voices. For a study of literacy from a gender perspective would need to portray the concrete situation of women in their families and communities, unravel their accumulated experiences, knowledge and practices and show how these cumulative and multiple forces interact and influence women's interest in literacy and the uses they give to literacy.

Finally, the overall experience of TLCs to date has shown that women participate as learners and as literacy volunteers in large numbers. Also, it has been commented upon earlier that women receive a "social sanction" to participate in the literacy campaigns. And yet, despite this advantage of securing women's participation, **there is a near total absence of gender issues in TLCs as they are presently conceived and designed.** On the other hand, some of the characteristics of TLCs promote women's participation. Thus, for example, the literacy classes in most cases take place in the immediate neighborhood of women learners; the literacy volunteers largely come from the same milieu as the learners and are in most cases, boys and girls known to the learners; each literacy class sets its own hours depending upon the convenience of the learners; the classes have a low learner-volunteer ratio and there is generally a good relationship between the volunteer and the learners.

According to Stromquist (1994) many of these features are favorable to women's participation which has also been corroborated by the **BRAC** (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) experience

in Bangladesh. Women's participation in the literacy programmes, however, is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. In the case of poor women, their poverty and powerlessness (due to problems of class and gender), make the acquisition of sustainable literacy a somewhat impossible dream. **There is presently little awareness among policy makers and planners about how literacy needs fit into the hierarchy of survival needs women have in everyday life.** What needs to be understood are the kind of expectations women have in joining literacy classes, the types of problems they face in attending literacy classes or in literacy acquisition and how they link literacy to their everyday life.

There is a need to raise gender issues in the pre-planning phase of the Total Literacy Campaign, and to incorporate them in the planning and implementation phases. The training programmes and materials prepared for TLCs have to become gender-sensitive. So also, appropriate Post-Literacy strategies for women need to be worked out. But above all else, there is presently little understanding about the importance of 'literacy to empower women. For in order to translate the policy directive of "education of empower women", it is imperative that a broader vision of literacy is taken. Until such a broad vision of literacy is taken, the present attempts will only perpetuate the stereotypical programmes that have domesticated women and have not brought any changes in their status at the individual societal and political levels.

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Box 4.1 - **CONCERNS ON LITERACY PRACTICES IN BANGLADESH**

♦ There is confusion, ambiguity and ambivalence regarding the concept of literacy which should be addressed through consultation and dialogue.

♦ Despite efforts by the government and NGOs high illiteracy remains a major problem in Bangladesh.

♦ Until the 4th Five Year Plan gender concerns were not consciously integrated into the development agenda.

♦ A serious gap exists between policy, planning and implementation. Highly centralized planning process, patriarchal attitudes and instrumentalist bias in the urban male development planners and implementors and marginalization of women obstruct the integration of women's concerns in national plan. It is urged that development planners and implementors be given gender sensitivity training.

♦ Lack of political will and commitment, lack of accountability and transparency are serious obstacles in the way of women's development in general and women's literacy in particular.

♦ Lack of coordination and networking among the GO and NGOs need to be addressed. Suitable machinery such as a national literacy forum should be established.

♦ A major problem related to basic education and literacy programmes is the absence of institutional capacity for research. Lack of dependable gender disaggregated data is also a serious problem which needs to be addressed.

♦ Several attitudinal and structural factors impede girls'equal participation especially in the rural areas. These are : patriarchal values and norms which emphasize women's role as a house wife and mother, perception of education as not relevant for girls, early marriage, restrictions on mobility after poverty. Anxiety about personal security because of deteriorating law and order situation; poverty, demand on the time of the girls for domestic work, difficult access to school, lack of transport, portrayal of gender stereotype in school curricula, curricula not need based.

♦ Inadequate physical facilities, lack of female teachers and educational materials and equipments, poor quality education, inadequate number of schools and literacy centers affected adversely the quality of administration and management.

♦ Lack of a National Literacy Training Center hampers standardization of teaching qualities and affects the literacy programs run by different agencies. Establishment of such a training institution merits serious consideration and consultation.

♦ There is concern about the recent rise of extremist forces using religion for social and political control who oppose women's visibility and mobility in the public arena. This phenomenon should be acknowledged as a threat to women's participation in development including education and literacy. Public action resisting the activities of such forces is important.

♦ Finally, reviewing the literacy efforts undertaken by GOB and NGOs and their impact on women, especially poor rural women, it is noted that both agencies have strengths which are complementary in nature and if each could learn from the other's experience and engage in concerted action, a remarkable improvement in women's literacy can be achieved within the year 2000.

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF WOMEN'S LITERACY IN BANGLADESH: PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Abu Hamid Latif

It is now well established that educating girls is the cheapest and the most reliable way of educating the nation. Explicit recognition of this premise at the policy formulation level in Bangladesh followed by well planned and attainable action programmes would have changed the literacy scenario of the country long ago. Unfortunately, this was not to be done resulting in a very low literacy rate, especially of the women in Bangladesh.

Since the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, the Government of Bangladesh has taken certain steps to grapple with the Education for All (EFA) issues. One of them is the constitution of a Task Force on Primary and Mass Education in 1992, "to report on the status of basic education in Bangladesh and recommend measures to tackle the enormous problems that beset the literacy scenario for almost a century[1]". The Report of the Task Force and a National Plan of Action are the two documents that provide policy perspectives and programme initiatives of the Government towards eradication of illiteracy within the shortest possible time through universalization of primary education, expanded mass education programme and initiating early childhood care and education programme. The major programme components are as follows[2]:

A. **Primary Education (6 - 10 years)**
   i) Formal Primary Education
   ii) Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE)

B. **Mass Education (6 - 45 years)**
   i) Non-Formal Education (6 -14 years)
   ii) Adult Education (15 - 45 years)
   iii) Continuing Education for all ages

C. **Early Childhood Care and Education (4 -5 years)**

Along with the Government, the NGOs, as partners, are working mainly in the areas of non-formal Pre-Primary, Primary, Adolescent, Adult and Continuing Education Programmes. Although NGOs started work in the literacy field immediately after the liberation war, it was not until 1976 that they made any serious intervention in this field. In 1990 a coalition of mainstream NGOs with major education programmes was formed and called itself the Gono Shakkhorata Ovijan (Campaign for Popular Education or CAMPE). According to a survey conducted in 1992 by CAMPE, there are as many as 326 NGOs involved in literacy programmes of one form or another. It is claimed that over the last two decades, these 326 NGOs have produced some 2.7 million literates including children, adolescents and adults[3]. Yet, in spite of the GO and NGO efforts, the literacy situation in Bangladesh has not changed much since the 1991 census.

Problems Related to Basic Education/Literacy Programmes

The Government efforts to provide Basic Education by the year 2000 through universal primary education and non-formal basic education programmes are handicapped by many problems and obstacles. One of the highly placed educational experts has recently identified two major obstacles to Primary Education for All in Bangladesh. "First, highly centralized planning and management structure and practices that are inconsistent with local planning, management, monitoring and social mobilization essential for achieving universal primary education, and second, the absence of the institutional capacity for R & D, technical support, evaluation and training for building capacities for planning and managing the largest public enterprise of a national scope which is the primary education system[4]".

Furthermore, in a recent research study on Promoting Female Education in Bangladesh, the researcher summarized the reasons for girls not to go to school:

1. Poverty, early marriage, home-schools distance, lack of congenial environment in school, lack of security, failure in examination, domestic work, non-availability of school dress, expenses for school supplies, gender disparity in curricula and textbooks, lack of encouragement from parents and other members of the family[5].

2. A group of 15 Imams and Madrasha teachers in a group discussion with the researcher of the study referred to above opined that girls can go to school properly dressed and with purdah but they should go to separate schools after primary level. Most of them felt that the girl's role is at home and primarily as mother not outside as leaders in public life. However, the problems of girl's low participation in schools identified by them are: poverty, male teacher's presence, pressure of curricula (for example, three languages at primary levels, e.g., Bangla, English and Arabic)[6].

3. The above source also mentioned that a few funding agencies were of the opinion that the obstacles of girls' education are policy-makers, practitioners and consumers who are not aware of gender issues and as a result, it is difficult for them to draw appropriate programmes and implement these on a priority basis[7].

It is clear that there are certain specific obstacles with regard to women's literacy:

- The traditional male-dominated set up of the society relegated the place of women in the background and they expect them to be in their niche so that the status quo is not disturbed. Women's literacy is suspect in such a situation.

- The religious and societal norms and values have upheld the virtuous wife and affectionate mother image of women in so glorious terms that it is difficult for common illiterate persons to think of their girls growing up in a different way by going to school. Besides, some customs and rituals for girls work as hindrances for regularly going to school and also result to low self-esteem and feeling of inferiority to men. For example, girls are not allowed in certain families, to go out of their homes during menstruation; to take some specific food items during that time; to say prayers; and to touch the holy books.

In another study the gender issues in teaching-learning materials have received closer attention as one can see from the quotations below[8]:

a. Representation of women authors compared to their male counterparts, is, as a whole, far less than their actual participation both in teaching and writing. In writing Bengali selections of classes I to V and editing the same from classes I to VIII a total of twenty five persons were involved, of whom only five i.e. one-fifth are women.

b. It is true that Bengali books of each class, which are generally collections of prose writing and poems by established writers, can not be equally shared by male and female authors. But it is also true that the representation of female authors is still lesser than what actually they deserve. It is a sad reality that of the total ninety one pieces of Bengali selections of classes VI to VIII only eight are written by female authors.

c. We are so biased with a male dominated mental make up that in citing any example even in a gender neutral situation, we readily refer to a man or a boy rather than to a woman or a girl. Most of the plays included in the Bengali selections do not have any female characters, or if there is any, they are portrayed in minor roles. In illustrations or drawings women's projection is far

less that of men. Where human virtues or accomplishments are recorded and successes in specific fields are mentioned the people selected, e.g., scientists, social workers, statement, war heroes and such others are men in almost absolute predominance. Stories or poems with female characterization are also very few. Even in cases of articles on folk art and handicrafts where women's participation is traditional and noteworthy, or in articles on cooperatives where women in recent times have proved their worth more than men, they were not mentioned. Where profession of people are described it is men who are cited as example, although in many traditional professions like weaving, pottery and tailoring, women always shared the work with men.

Issues on the Theory and Practice of Women's Literacy in the Country.

It would have been fitting on the part of a practitioner of women's literacy programme to identify the issues on the theory and practice of women's literacy in the country. As I am not a practitioner, I can only raise the general issues related to literacy programmes in Bangladesh.

- Adult literacy programmes undertaken and implemented by the Government have never been a part of the overall educational policy formulation, as such, there was no regular programme. Adult literacy projects undertaken from time to time were subjected to repeated dislocations with the change of Government. Even after adoption of the EFA National Plan of Action, the situation has not changed.

- Target setting in literacy programmes has, most of the time, been unrealistic. As a result, there has been a wide gap between the expected outcome and actual achievement.

- The Government has not yet been able to put in place an organizational structure for its non-formal educational programmes on a permanent basis. Inadequate institutional capacity for planning, programming, management and execution continues to be a major handicap in achieving the targets set for literacy programmes.

- Literacy programmes suffer from competent leadership and professional expertise as there has been no attempt to create a pool of resource persons for the specific tasks associated with the programmes.

- Social mobilization involving all sections of people at all levels as a strategy for creating a social movement for eradication of illiteracy remains a distant goal.

- Centralized programme planning and center-based and highly structured delivery system of the Government and quite a number of NGO literacy programmes leave little scope for alternative approaches and experimentation.

- Disparity between boys and girls and between urban and rural primary schools exist. Although the recent statistics indicate that the gender disparity in enrollment and subsequent retention can be bridged if concerted efforts are made, the girl child deserves special attention to remove the gender disparity in other forms in primary schools. Similarly the rural schools must be brought at par with urban schools.

- The learning needs of the girls and the functionality of their learning should constitute the core of the curricula, syllabuses, contents and teaching-learning processes.

- The pedagogy should be learner-centered rather than teacher-centered in the training programmes of the literacy

workers. In-service or recurring training of literacy trainers is a key determinant for teacher mastery, and teacher mastery is an important factor to understand improved classroom practices. Assistance to literacy workers works best when it is concrete, regular and on-going and linked to practice[9].

- Assessment of learning is one area which has not received due attention in both Government and NGO basic education programs. Minimum learning competencies have to be set for each type of program. Assessing Continuous Learning Achievement is a useful means for improving the quality of education through continuous monitoring of progress. The major focus on this should be to provide a learning package so that the children can find interest in learning and become useful citizens of the country[10].

- Teacher-student ratio is another key factor in the classroom teaching-learning. This is very high in the formal primary schools (1:60) in the country. The non-formal primary schools and other literacy centers run by GO and NGOs are somewhat better in this respect. However it is imperative to keep the teacher-student ratio within a reasonable limit to improve.

- Supervision is another key element in improving the quality of learning in the literacy programs when it is seen as help and it is timely and relevant, related to practice and readily available and practices in an atmosphere of trust.

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WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES IN POST-LITERACY CAMPAIGNS- SOME EXPERIENCES FROM TAMIL NADU

Sister Sudha

Most literacy activists are familiar with the excitement generated by the tremendous response from women to the Total Literacy Campaigns. All such programmes are replete with inspiring examples of women overcoming antagonistic situations - within or outside the home - and coming together in this effort.

A review of available literature attributes this mass mobilization to the following factors:

1. The high pitch media campaign which obtains temporary social sanction for women to move out of their usual space;

2. The linking-up of literacy objectives with other vital aspects of women's immediate life situation;

3. The flexibility of the teaching model which left the choice of time and place to the learner, thereby accommodating her various commitments; and

4. The extensive use of song and drama which considerably enhanced the cultural appeal of the campaign strategy.

The Samata Kalajatha of March 9th, 1993, was a unique demonstration of the kind of spirit with which women, especially young women, were participating in this movement. The Samata National Convention at Jansi made a conscious attempt to give a direction to this exuberance. It was recognized that the most important task was to sustain the movement. The immediate agenda was to identify and implement strategies which would extend the gains of the literacy campaigns. The participants agreed that a larger, more in-depth gender content should be introduced. They were also categorical that strategies would not be centrally formulated and passed down to the states. Instead, it was suggested that states should interact with local activists and design strategies that would cater to their diverse needs. Common features that were to be kept in mind were:

- There were three categories of activists who had to be addressed at the field level - the organizer, the volunteer and the neo literate.

- A conscious effort to draw on the creative energies of the young girls - jatha artists, volunteers and motivated learners - was to be made.

The complexity of requirements was indeed a formidable challenge. The great variety of strategies emerging from states have been little documented and even less analyzed. Often this failure to document is misunderstood as "nothing much is happening in post-literacy". This is not true. This presentation attempts to report on some of the initiatives being pursued in Tamil Nadu. How have the strategies been conceptualized? Are they gender sensitive? How effective are they proving to be on the ground?

The Case of Panchayat (or Leadership) Training for Women

In the wake of the 73rd-74th Constitutional Amendments, and the provision of reserving one-third of all membership in these bodies for women, this was identified as one of the important areas of intervention. If women could be properly trained, given the existing network and the implications of the reservation for women, panchayats were seen as a tremendous opportunity for women to enter into decision-making that could shape their lives. These 4-day residential training camps for women had fairly ambitious

objectives, as well as a rigorous, meticulously planned schedule.

The core objectives of this training for about 30-50 women are:

- Provide the knowledge, skills for women to participate in decision making (for development at the local level).
- Extend support to panchayat level functionaries or themselves become capable panchayat level functionaries.

The methodology adopted was a mix of 2 kinds of sessions. Type 1 sessions covered information inputs on a range of topics. To the extent possible, the information was provided in writing, so that they could be re-read, studied and referred to when necessary by the participants. The content was simple and direct, and made use of the BGVS mode of stress on a motivated transfer of information.

The Information Content included topics on:

a) Panchayat Laws;
b) Politics of Panchayats;
c) Panchayats new agenda;
d) Gender issues;
e) Larger socio economic background in which panchayats function.

The type 2 session comprised Mahila Samakhya gender-sensitive participatory sessions which were altered according to local needs. Their main objective was to develop personality and skills. Participants were encouraged to overcome their inhibitions, gain confidence in themselves, apply their mind critically to what others said, think for themselves and acquire certain minimum skills in communication and organization. The challenge was to draw up a schedule of the right mix of both type 1 and 2 sessions so that the programme was participatory, and informative without becoming too heavy. Sessions were interspersed with games of different kinds, as well as songs. At the end of the 4 days, when the objective and a subjective evaluation was done, the feedback in all 6 camps was extremely positive.

The Generation of Skills included

1) conducting a group meeting and/or a discussion;
2) sustaining routine activities and programmes in a group;
3) giving a speech;
4) writing and presenting a report;
5) developing self confidence and overcoming inhibitions;
6) listening to and critically analyzing what others say; and
7) reading a newspaper critically.

An attempt was made to ensure that a section of the participants were neo-literates. Except for 2 districts (out of the total 6 where such camps have been held), other districts did not pay sufficient attention to this aspect. It must also be mentioned that the extreme poverty of the neo-literates and the consequent need to secure income, made it very difficult for them to attend 4 days of training at a stretch.

There were too many sessions to attempt a total discrete analysis for presentation here. However, experiences regarding a few of the sessions are placed here to indicate the scope of this training camp as a continuing education strategy.

I. **Drawings** - Participants were asked to draw an object which, to them, embodied a prominent quality of women. There was a lot of stereotyping - many flowers and trees were sketched. These were later brought into discussion - are these true? what effect do these images have on women? etc. There were also different images coming through - some drew stars, flags and other such symbols reflecting changing aspirations. Introspection was not too deep - the main aim was to get participants to objectify and draw - some women later said this was the first time they had drawn anything outside of a kolam. In one district, acclaim went to a young girl who had drawn a computer - yes, the modern women was beginning to peep through (or was this too a new stereotype?).

II. The theme of **myths** regarding women as the basis for soul-searching group discussions. Topics chosen were

controversial and complex, e.g. a woman's place is in the home; women are naturally inferior to men; a woman is a burden to her family; woman is her own worst enemy etc. It was sobering, indeed, almost frightening to see how deeply embedded these myths were among majority of the women. Through a process of dialogue, questions and examples, it was possible to derive the alternative to the first 3 arguments. However, the woman as her own worst enemy was a topic which entailed maximum discussion. The inability to see beyond the actions and consequences of the mother-in-law's behaviors; the strong temptation to absolve the male and blame the woman were difficult concepts to contend with. The task of getting the literacy activists to extend their questioning attitudes to this dominant ideology still remains before us.

a) These 'myth' sessions proved to be eye openers all around. An incident which was presented as a drama by a particular group was as follows: A young girl grew up doing the housework, taking care of children, going out to fetch water and fuel. When the time comes for marriage, the brother curses her for being a burden. The mother comes forward in defense of her child, enumerating the ways she had supported and worked for the family. The brother becomes ashamed and resolves never to insinuate such a thing again. Happy ending!

b) However, in many groups, participants found it difficult to evolve and dramatize the alternative, positive image of the woman. Much more inputs are required on this ideological front.

III. Question time: A particularly invigorating session was 'question time'. An activity familiar to all participants was selected - "making tea" or "cooking rice". The idea was to make women think of innovative questions around this small everyday activity. Initially, there would be some starting trouble - a groping around for questions. Early questions would generally be knowledge-based, for instance: *"How does rice grow?" "What vitamins are present in rice?", "How much water is necessary for rice to get cooked"* and so on. But, with a little pushing, the questions would become more ambitious, more starting - *"Why can't rice be cooked in kerosene?", "Why isn't rice blue in color?".* And then came wider questions like. *"Who fixes the price of rice - the farmer or the trader?". "Why is rice not properly available in rations shops?"* - and then, ultimately *"Who cooks the rice in the house?"*. The progression in the format of questions also indicates a progression in the participants' minds relative to the whole business of cooking rice. This simple technique served as a starting point to go into why we need to ask questions regarding things around us, and what are the different kind of questions that need to be asked. Participants enjoyed this session in great deal. They had never realized how much could be done, armed with a simple question mark!

IV. Dream session: Another favorite panchayat-related participatory session was the dream hour. Women were to dream that the panchayat was theirs - to do with as they pleased. They could effect any changes they wished. Women were amazed to discover, during the review, how eminently realizable their dreams were - bus facilities, toilets (with water - what luxury!); nurses present in the hospital which was open 24 hours and never ran out of medicines; a night without mosquitoes - and many more such visions.

a) There were the few who had bigger visions, who dreamt that all castes would intermingle and live together, and there would be no separate colonies in villages; those who wanted to ban arrack and reclaim their husbands; some who dreamt of marriages for all rights without dowry, one who dreamt that all people would be equally rich (or equally poor), another who dreamt of bigamy disappearing in practice... and so on.

b) The motive was to create dreams, to capture them. It was to show how it was possible and necessary to dream, to have various kinds of dreams. Secondly, the achievability of dreams relating to local facilities - in the context of a functioning panchayat was highlighted. It was important for women to see that their intervention in panchayats could bring their own dreams closer to reality.

V. **Rural Development Survey**: The presentation on the issues before rural women (including development directions) was followed by a field trip to a nearby area. A questionnaire on conditions of rural women would be taken along and a survey done. This was followed by a cultural programme organized by the participants themselves.

a) This composite activity session achieved many things at the same time. The personalized interview session with individuals brought to light a number of problems - which differed in nature from area to area. Women participants found this experience very moving. The skills that formed part of the survey were:

- Recording the experiences of individuals.
- Putting this together and making generalizations
- Presenting the analysis in the form of a report
- Discussing ways of addressing problems.

b) The cultural programme, we found, really brought out the organizing abilities of the participants. Preparations were left entirely to participants. Apart from the performance (which was anyway usually well received), the review assessed whether the programme had been well planned; were all members involved in some way or the other, was there a proper seating and stage arrangements, how was the audience mobilized? Who conducted the programme - was this decided before hand, did she do her role effectively, etc., etc. ...

The review made in the aftermath of a successful communication with lay people helped the participants to understand organization of functions in villages much better. In some cases, we were surprised by the efficiency with which a particular participant stage managed the whole show. The discovery of such natural leaders was one of the long term gains of the training camps. At the same time, others also saw the need to start preparing themselves to hold such events.

An exhaustive account of each and every session being out of question, these few instances are a sample to show how a serious effort was made to upgrade the level of literacy activists and empower them to think and function independently in their areas.

In some districts, the activists have taken the initiative to hold block and village level camps. The long-term impact of these camps is more difficult to gauge. Unfortunately, though most districts wanted to hold many such camps at block and village level, there were hardly any funds available for this, and only about 2 or 3 were held at the block level. However, what is important is that subsequent to the camp, a group of women with leadership abilities who could provide leadership at the district level emerged. Today, in all 6 districts where these camps were held, there is a district galvanized positively into action. The camps have proved to be a good strategy to sensitize women in literacy campaigns to the possibilities for intervention at the gram panchayat and to effectively coordinate panchayat intervention with post-literacy work.

Box 4.2 - **PROBLEMS OF LITERACY PROGRAMS IN NEPAL**
(Based on the discussion held during the National Seminar)

Limited teaching method - At the moment the national literacy primers "Naya Goreto" are widely used throughout the country. The implementation of one package has resulted in the use of the same teaching methodology all over the country.

Coordination and linkage - Government, NGOs and INGOs are working on literacy in the same region without any coordination. It has been reported many times that some participants attend the different classes offered by these agencies. The other problem is related to services. Agencies working in different service sectors have not been able to supplement or complement each other's work.

Dropout rate - Dropping out from literacy class is a common problem. It ranges from 12% to 50% of initial enrolment.

Getting literacy materials in time - All the agencies conducting literacy classes have to contact the Ministry of Education, Culture and Social Welfare (MOECSW) as it is responsible for the printing and distribution of literacy materials. Such centralized system has created problems to get literacy materials in time as MOECSW has not been able to print all the required literacy materials and distribute them in time.

Low quality of training - There is a provision of conducting a pre-service training of 9 days and in-service training of 3 days for the facilitators of literacy classes. One of the general complaints is the quality of training. The pace of expansion of literacy class could not keep up with the formation of good trainers. Participants expressed their concern that some agencies, as they require trainers according to expansion of their program are using untrained and raw trainers as master trainers.

Lack of resources - NGOs are not getting enough support for strengthening their supervision system. They also have to follow pre-developed criteria of donors.

Linking learning with practice - The provision of supporting only 6 months literacy classes has limited the opportunities to train literacy participants in a way that they could link their learning with practice. In fact, this limitation has created a big question on the use of literacy skills.

No identification of needs for follow-up class - Although a number of agencies are involved in follow-up of basic literacy classes, needs identification has not been carried out at national level and has remained in limited areas of the NGO sector.

Lack of uniformity in facilities - The literacy implementors have emerged with their own policies. It has resulted in differences in support and delivery system of literacy class. As various agencies are working in the same region, differences in policies have created problems.

Lack of incentives and motivation - Facilitators and supervisors hired for literacy work are being paid comparatively lower incentives with the understanding that they are volunteering their time.

No political commitment - There is no political commitment for literacy programs even if political parties have mentioned that they will work for literacy.

Problem in supervision, monitoring and evaluation - Geographical remoteness and lack of resources in strengthening supervision system have resulted in poor supervision and monitoring of program.

No regional based curriculum - There is only one type of literacy material for basic literacy course which is not supportive of the diverse geographical regions and communities of Nepal. The literacy primers are not able to depict the language and culture of the area where those books are being used.

Use of National Language - There are certain benefits of one language policy as it promotes national integration as well as participants getting opportunity to learn the national language that they could use in official business. On the other hand, language options for literacy is a way to empower minority where use of local language will be more realistic, could be more meaningful and where women and men could learn much faster.

There are several alternative ways of literacy testing in Nepal that could replace the limitation of use of one language and one curriculum.

CONCLUSION

BEYOND THE 3Rs: MAKING LITERACY WORK FOR WOMEN

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN POINTS RAISED IN THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SEMINARS

When women READ the world, it can be one of the most powerful experiences. For indeed, literacy is a tool that can help women and men understand themselves, their communities and society at large. Literacy involves change because it offers possibilities of new ways of looking and doing things. Finally and perhaps more importantly, literacy is about power. It involves the power to define and label others as 'illiterate' which stigmatizes and consequently marginalizes. At the same time, it can also mean power for the women to name their experiences as well as read about other women's lives and realize that theirs is not an isolated situation.

The national and regional seminars helped us not only in appreciating the complexity of literacy practices but also in providing an opportunity to systematize the body of knowledge and practices that were exchanged. The discussion mostly revolved around the elements of a literacy program and the issues emerging from such practices.

The elements of a literacy program can be described through the following questions:

1. **WHO** will be involved?
   - The individuals (in this case, women) who attend the classes
   - The family members who have to be convinced of the importance of literacy classes for women (this could be the father or the husband)
   - The leaders of the community who are key to the mobilization of other members
   - The community members who support the program, for example, through building the classroom
   - The teacher of the literacy classes
   - The government and NGO worker involved in the literacy program
   - The external agency (government, NGO, foreign organization) providing support (financial and human resources)

2. **WHERE** are the opportunities for learning?
   - classrooms
   - literacy centers
   - camps
   - library
   - community centers

3. **WHEN** do these learning opportunities take place?
   - weekends
   - evenings
   - after harvesting, work
   - every day or every other day for three months or six months

4. **WHAT** can be learned?
   - basic reading and writing
   - functional and integrated skills that would cover health, income-generating, savings and credit
   - critical awareness of political issues like gender inequality

5. **HOW** will these learning opportunities be organized?
   - strategies and approaches
   - materials to be used (basic and post-literacy)
   - language to be used
   - partnerships necessary for such programs

In every element, there were key issues that have emerged and as a way of organizing the issues, the key word LIFE is used.

L - earning Environment
I - ntegrated nature of Literacy
F - emale Literacy as a critical concern
E - mpowering literacy practices

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- Motivation

"..the importance of motivating women for literacy given the various psychological, physical, economic and social obstacles which make literacy an unattainable or unnecessary goal for women."

- Socio-cultural environment for Learning

"As part of the learning environment, we need to address socio-cultural factors affecting women's literacy like language, religion and patriarchal ideology which views women as instruments in the family, community and nation."

- Training of teachers

"How do we institutionalize staff development and training of teachers?"

"How do we resolve the problem of lack of qualified female teachers or having very young volunteers to tackle adult women?"

"Neo-literates are often used as teachers which gives them confidence and sustains their literacy level. In some places, the women are now capable to run their own literacy centers with minimum supervision. But their capabilities have to be developed and strengthened."

- Sustaining and replicability for literacy programs

" This is an important issue since the success of a particular project is not a guarantee that it will be successful if replicated in a larger scale. Attendant problem to this are: confronting the problem of large figures, motivation, and language."

"Can there be one model of literacy? In many of our discussions we have said no and the mere fact that we can have as many literacy programs as we have presented here. Related to this is the very issue of replicability. Once we know there is a success story we want to try and see if it can be replicated in other situations. But it is not easy to replicate models because of difference of social context."

- Role of external agencies

"The role of the NGOs or people from the outside should not be undermined because they are the catalysts who bring possibilities in a community who may not be aware of these because of individual and structural constraints."

INTEGRATED NATURE OF LITERACY

- Literacy is not simply reading and writing but encompasses other areas of life.

"It was also found that most of successful programs are those which have an integrated/holistic approach to literacy. Examples of these are literacy combined with the provision of basic services, literacy combined with income generation and basic services, and literacy combined with infrastructure"

- Literacy does not only involve the pedagogical process but should include other support areas like research.

"To what extent are we going to pour our efforts in research when we develop our curriculum and instructional materials."

" There is a need for research in the following areas:

1. Theories and concepts of empowerment especially with reference to women;
2. Elements/strategies of empowering education;
3. Content analysis of literacy primers;
4. Study of training methodologies;
5. Evaluation methods/impact assessment;
6. Methodology for material development including pre-testing methods and visuals; and
7. Survey of literature/annotated bibiliographies of existing research studies."

- What are the linkages made in the formal and non-formal system?

"One is the question of equivalencies. If you have a certain curriculum, how is that going to be translated into the formal system? So this is very much related to the relationship of formal and non-formal education. How can our non-formal activities be legitimized in the formal setting."

"The need to link micro efforts to mainstream realities was stressed, and other experiences with assimilating students with non-formal education to the mainstream education system were shared. Mainstreaming is essential to give students an identity with others as well as to get a certificate to prove their education level. The efforts get foiled when the mainstream is not prepared to support them by being flexible in enrolment rules or in the curriculum"

FEMALE LITERACY

"....women need to be prodded to attend literacy programs especially those who have small children. The lack of enthusiasm can be traced to women's multiple burden and participation in economic activities."

"In some curricula, they have managed to incorporate a WID component. But this is subject to discussion of what we mean when we say women in development. This is a whole area of debate especially now when everybody says that women should be integrated in development. Women are asking, can't women just be better mothers and wives, in their traditional roles?."

" What can we do if this alternative literacy programs are gender blind? Here comes the importance of the women's movement in trying to incorporate a gender perspective in the curriculum and instructional materials."

"It was clear that the most successful strategies were those which linked literacy to a broader process of empowerment in the minds of women ---i.e. which enables women to see illiteracy as one of the factors which perpetuates their powerlessness and marginalization within the family, community and society at large. "

EMPOWERING LITERACY PRACTICES

► Developing curriculum and materials

"We have all been saying that it is important for our curriculum and materials to be learner centered. And that means we should use generative themes for our curriculum as well as our textbooks. It also includes learner generated materials."

"... development of instructional materials and curriculum should be colloborative with government, NGOs and academe, working together."

" in developing curriculum and materials, one is faced with the issue of flexibility. While we are supposed to be developing curriculum ond instructional materials that we want to disseminate as widely as possible, we also know that there are different communities with different conditions.So how can we be flexible? Related to this, is the use of pilot programs or projects in the hope that after the pilot program, we will be able to use lessons here to disseminate. But then you get caught in the question of, "Are you really able to replicate?"

► Language

"It is not only what language to use, whether the dominant language or the ethnic languages, but how are we representing women, the sentiment of the language".

► Teaching Methods

"There is great variation amd uneven quality in this area because of the decision of the groups involved to be flexible and participatory, and more responsive to the needs of the community."

► On People's Participation

"The demand for literacy must come from the grassroots. It should start with participatory planning to weave the needs of the community. The point of view of the learners must count first and foremost. The positive experience of tapping community teachers should be continued. For a literacy program to be successful, it has to satisfy the basic needs. If not interwoven with the life and aspirations of the community, literacy program work would be meaningless."

► On Evaluation

"Learning from experience should be the main goal of evaluation. Towards this end, the focus should be on documentation, analysis, culling out key principles, and evolving state-of-the art methodologies which balance qualitative and quantitative indicators. There must be a balance between external and internal evaluations."

IDENTIFICATION OF COMMON AREAS OF INTEREST/COLLABORATION AT THE REGIONAL SEMINAR

A. Curriculum Development and Literacy Materials

- technical assistance on designing and developing curriculum and materials
- use/advocacy of learner-generated materials (LGM) at the regional level
- post-literacy activities sharing

B. Research

- content and methodology of literacy programs with specific focus on gender-sensitive issues and feminist methodology
- strategies for continuing education/post-literacy work
- different methods of evaluation and analysis of possible new models of evaluation
- listing of available materials on women and literacy

C. Training

- workshop on monitoring and evaluation
- learner generated material development
- curriculum and materials development which is gender sensitive

D. Networking

- continuing dialogue among practitioners and researchers within countries and region
- field study tours/meetings
- clearing house (regional) for materials/reports/documents
- regular communication at regular level (e.g. newsletter, booklet)
- preparation of a list of women literacy practitioners

E. Advocacy and Pressure Groups

- preparation of advocacy materials on issues in a given country
- advocacy for policy development on women and literacy at the regional level
- mainstream gender perspective in literacy work
- mainstream literacy work among women's groups

F. Dream Project

- Video documentation of women's literacy efforts within the region

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THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Lalita Ramdas

If I am painting a grim scenario there is good reason for this - the situation is nothing short of alarming. So **what can be done**?

I am especially happy that this group here represents a mixture of those working in education and with a focus on women. Clearly there are synergies that need to be harnessed and put to further creative action in the future. In this section I would like to list out a number of concrete steps which I believe we need to take collectively in order to turn the tide.

- **Mass mobilization of all sectors in society for quality primary education for all-with a special focus on the Girl Child**. This is the best insurance against illiteracy and it should be put as top priority on the Agenda of every NGO, Government department, Panchayat, Corporate Body. As women interested in enabling and empowering women to gain direct access to information, knowledge and therefore creating decision-making capacity, it is my increasing conviction that true interest and fluency in, reading and writing really develops at the school level. And **all our efforts must be mobilized to enabling at least the next generation to be genuinely literate, unlike at present**.

- Leading from the above - give a call for **a ten year mass campaign for primary education** - like a new freedom struggle - with emphasis on quality teaching, relevant content, learning that is creative and fun, and building up a generation that is a learning, thinking and questioning citizenry.

- **Launch a National Platform or Network for Education - involving a wide cross-section of people from several sectors**. This is particularly critical in view of the current trends: liberalization, Structural Adjustment Programmes, and the increasing investment by foreign agencies in Education in the so-called BIMARU States - i.e. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh.

- **Mobilize a wider cross-section of citizens in support of the struggle for women to become literate** - using the issues significant in the day to day lives of women - i.e. rising prices, water, health and education for children, the job market and employment.

  Issues like public health, sanitation, garbage clearance, local environment need to be taken up in local communities by NGOs who have also been so busy with the "larger" issues, that we have often tended to neglect the more "mundane" things like those listed above.

  For instance if we can mobilize communities to improve the atmosphere and environment of every classroom for the child in primary school. The world view of the future citizen in the country is shaped in those millions of dreary classrooms. In their present condition can they ever provide an inspiration to perform, to aspire to excellence, to create any form of aesthetic sensibility?

- **Develop a broad framework of issues, around the basic understanding of citizenship building and ensure that all our institutions from the school level up include a more proactive and creative way in which citizenship education can be propagated**.

- **Work with all available partners regardless of political and other ideological barriers to achieve universal learning** - perhaps the one non-controversial objective. It is essential that we rethink our positions on partners building - and I am specifically talking of some of the following:

  - **Trade and Industry** - the emerging dominant force in the new 'global' economic order.

  - **Government sector - social welfare, education etc. at local levels - we need to reharness their considerable infrastructure**.

  - **Traditional women's organizations** - the Mahila Mandals, satsangs, Bhajan

groups - these need to be contacted, reached out to, "infiltrated" so to speak.

- **Trade Unions**
- **All community based organizations**

- **Understand, refine, develop and propagate the concept of a Lifelong Learning Society as part of Post-Literacy** in its widest connotation. This also calls for an understanding that as presently structured, the life of an average girl/women in Indian society does not provide her with either the leisure or the environment that encourages her to continue to study, read or write. The need to create a "learning environment" has been much talked about, but continues to remain an idea only.

- Perhaps we need to **set targets whereby groups of NGOs, corporate sector and citizens can together create community libraries/reading rooms and ensure the provision and supply of relevant materials**. In places like Thailand, local organizations like the temples, the monks, Association of Librarians etc. were mobilized to set-up and run libraries etc. Perhaps we need to explore the local resources available to channel them in this direction.

- **A well developed supplementary programme for women needs to be developed wherein their role as citizens, members of the Panchayat, can be encouraged and supported**. This involves working with existing local administration and officials to orient and educate them to be more receptive to such ideas. A recent article by an IAS officer from Maharashtra published by MANUSHI eloquently portrays that more often than not, the present 30% reservation for women in Panchayats, can easily become a complete farce and a mere token. The need to intervene at the level of the Panchayat is all the more critical given the increasing role envisaged for local self-government in almost every sector of developmental activities. Empowering women for greater political participation can only be facilitated by the right kind of education that prepares her for that role from very early in her socialization.

- **Formulate a creative new vision on the use of media for literacy and education**. The power and potential of the present day electronic media has not been harnessed by us. Can we hire a transponder exclusively for beaming "alternate" programmes?! Perhaps some of these ideas sound wild - but it is perhaps time to think boldly!

- **Finally, I would urge that women's groups work much more closely with men and women in achieving several of the goals identified above. The entire strategy for Empowerment of women has to be brought onto the agendas - both political, and personal, of the men in our society.**

Summary of Main Issues Discussed in the Second Day of the Regional Seminar

Ma. Luisa Doronilla

Embedded in the problem of illiteracy are empowerment and consciousness. And this will have implications on how we define quality, how we define targets and the kind of achievement levels that we are talking about, depending on what we want to achieve. So many questions have been raised regarding this and an intriguing statement from Cambodia, where people say, "We don't need to be literate, we have no problem with being illiterate". Maybe that is one answer and could be true when the society is oral. So what is literacy for?

Second, who makes decision about this knowledge, what will be the political implication of such? What are the implications in terms of identity in relation to the knowledge or the content of the program?

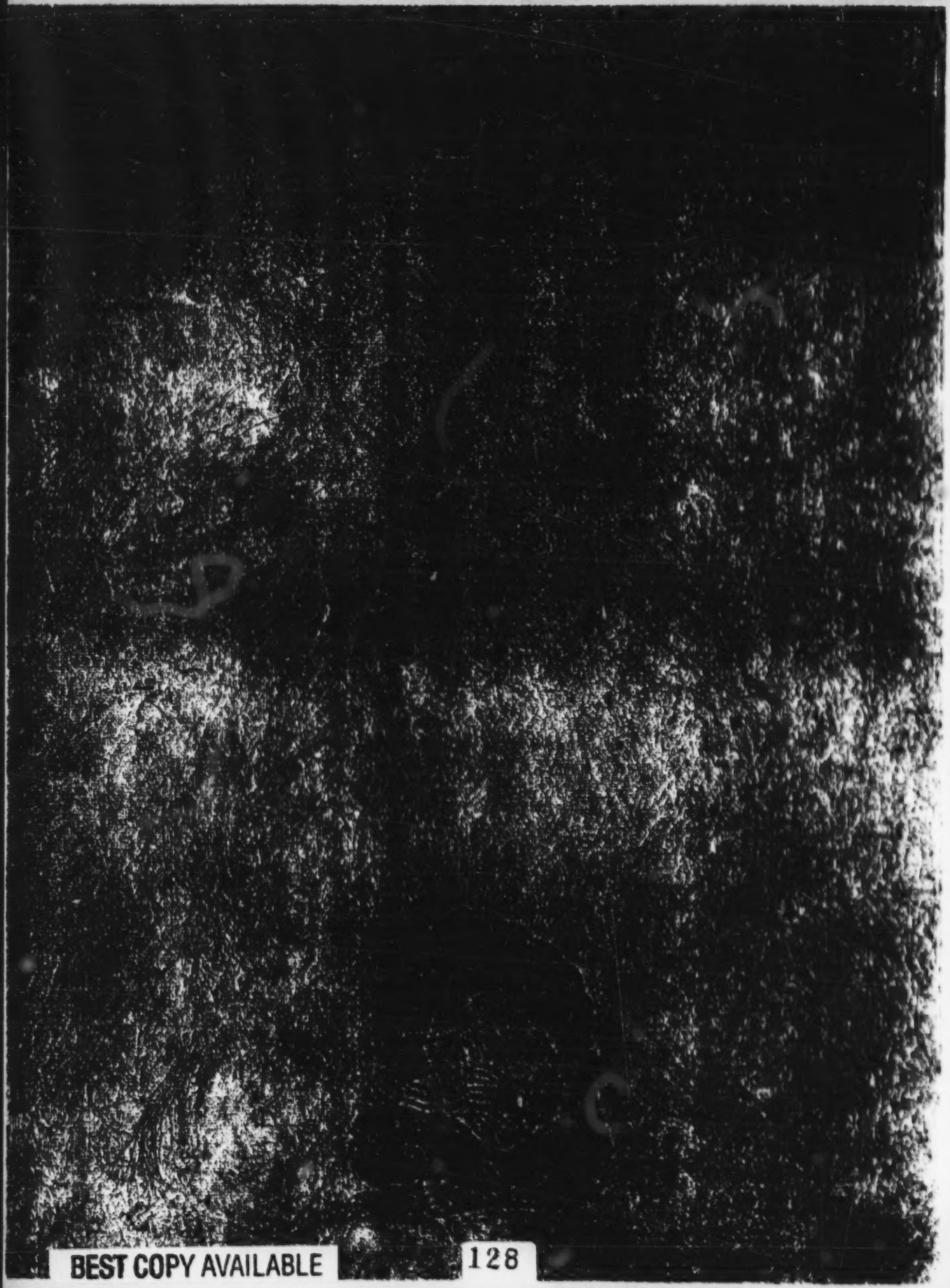
Third, how do we relate the formal and the informal education system?

Fourth, discussion on the setting of agenda involving many actors at the international level. There have been a lot of discussion about this, the setting of agenda and who determines the shift in the agenda. But questions coming to the surface in relation to this also point to the kinds of modification in the relationship between actors at the ground level, at the local and international levels as it relates to partnership and equality, modifications that can be made and has been made based on our experiences.

And lastly, the sharing of work between and among GOs (government organizations) and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and the kind of collaboration that has been started as far as these groups are concerned.

Ten Recommendations from the Regional Seminar

1. Awareness building campaign at the community and national levels on the importance of literacy, their possible contribution to literacy programs and the removal of cultural constraints on women's education and literacy;
2. Networking to create pressure on the national government to recognize women's literacy as a priority national goal and to make appropriate budgetary allocation for literacy efforts;
3. Pooling of community resources, both human and financial;
4. The diversity of field and life experiences should be reflected in the curriculum and materials used for literacy efforts. The learner perspective should be given priority in these materials.
5. Come up with strategies linking literacy with income-generation and basic social services;
6. The development of post-literacy materials should be emphasized for sustainability.
7. Institute an effective training for literacy teachers which will include gender sensitivity;
8. Relevant research on the various aspects of women's literacy to support and strengthen literacy efforts at all levels;
9. Institute an effective mechanism for proper monitoring and continuous evaluation to facilitate and support literacy programs; and
10. Establishment of a proper and effective mechanism for coordination between literacy actors.



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